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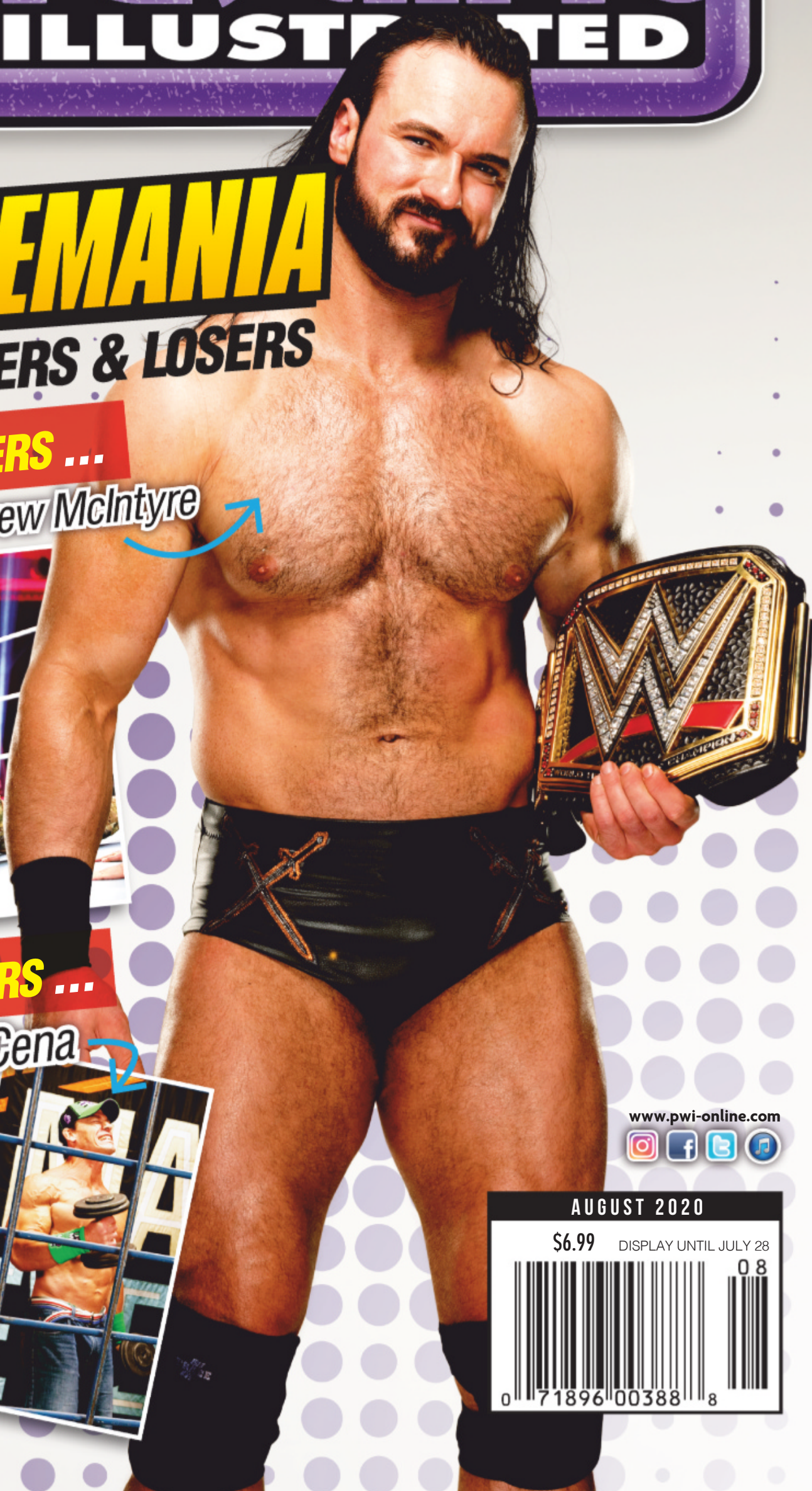
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I FEEL SORRY for my wife. Having me around the house for a few hours a day is, at best, tolerable. When I come home from work on Friday, June 5, I'll be there for good. As I announced in a tweet series in March, I am retiring after almost 41 years with *PWI* and its affiliated magazines.

"I'm not sure this retirement thing is going to work," I've been told on more than one occasion by the woman who came to work for G.C. London Publishing Corp. as graphic artist Darlene Fallo in 1983 and left as Darlene Saks in 1985. She has her routine, and my being around is probably going to mess that up. "You'd better find something to do all day."

Before I consider how to save my 36-year marriage, let me say goodbye to something that has consumed my life for nearly a half-century.

When I started in the wrestling publishing business, I was—quite literally—a kid. A friend and I thought we could put together one of those wrestling newsletters that were publicized in the fan club sections of the national wrestling magazines. Just before we were ready to get going, my buddy told me that his father had been given an opportunity for employment in Hong Kong. Great for him, but I was 14 years old and left to launch the publication on my own.

I summoned my courage and decided to go for it. That decision probably changed my life. I learned skills between the ages of 14 and 17 that I would develop in college, and finally help me land a job with Stanley Weston's G.C. London. Honestly, working for a wrestling magazine was never my goal. I wanted to be a sportswriter for a daily newspaper. I got a taste of that life during college when I spent several years working as a part-time high school sports reporter for one of the country's largest newspapers, *Newsday*. While at that job, it dawned on me that the newspaper lifestyle was not all that wonderful: working night hours, weekends, holidays.

The wrestling magazine gig was really sweet—a 9-5 day, weekends and holidays off—and, most importantly, working with a group of guys who were really fun to be around. The office shenanigans were insane. For example, new employees (myself included) became part of a tradition that made them witness to a lengthy build-up to an office feud between two co-workers, culminating with a lot of noise emanating from behind the file cabinets and someone emerging with a face full of Dracula blood. There were late-afternoon poker games, Strat-o-Matic baseball, wiffleball—and, still, every deadline was met. This, my friends, was not happening at *Newsday*.

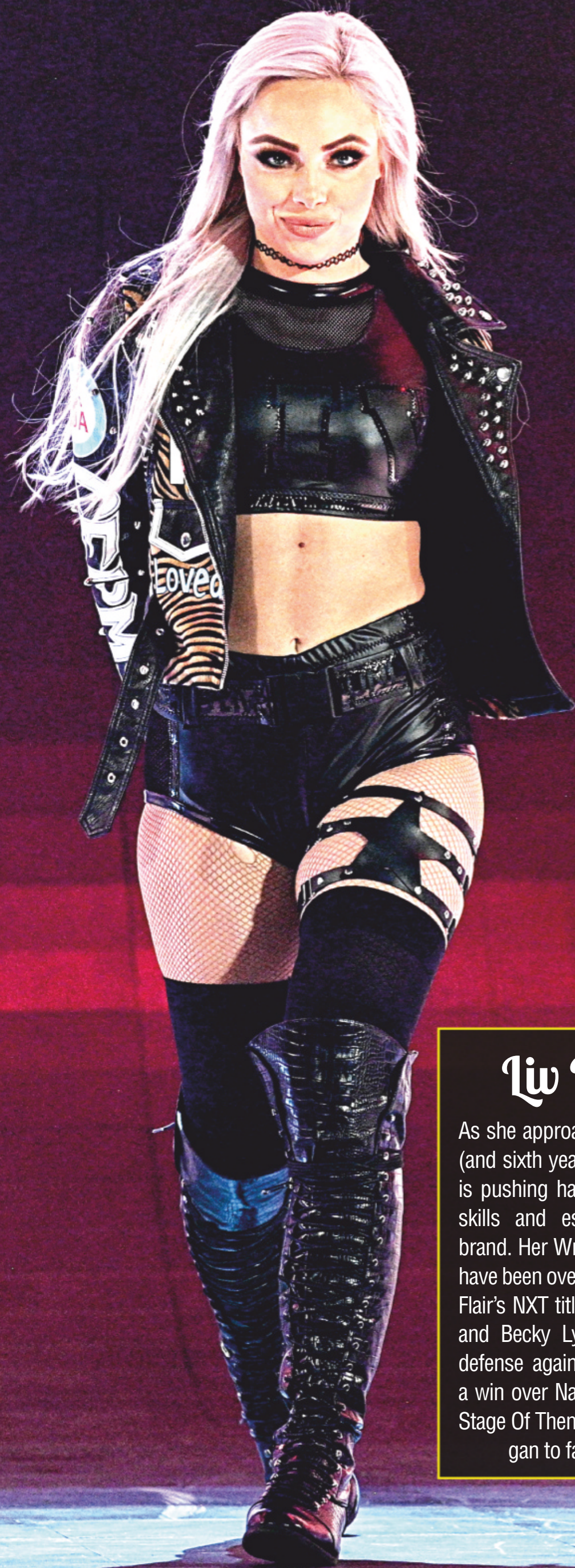
It was not my wrestling background that got me in the door in Freeport, Long Island. I came at the recommendation of a former *Newsday* worker, Gary Morgenstein, who had gone on to work at London as the primary wrestling writer. I tested for a vacant Associate Editor slot while still attending college. I was offered the position, but after a great deal of contemplation, chose to decline the job. I knew I would never get my diploma if I left at that point. Another position opened a while later, and I received a call from Editor-in-Chief Peter King. Again, I declined. Finally, in July of 1979, two months after graduation, there was yet another opening. This time, Peter warned, "Now or never, Stu." I was in. And I'm still in. For another couple of weeks, anyway.

It's been quite a ride (see "*Stu Saks' Top 10*" sidebar), but it's time to get off and let someone else on. That someone is Kevin McElvaney, who will be

(continued on page 60)

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Lia Morgan

As she approaches her 26th birthday (and sixth year in wrestling), Morgan is pushing hard to improve her ring skills and establish her individual brand. Her WrestleMania victory may have been overshadowed by Charlotte Flair's NXT title win over Rhea Ripley and Becky Lynch's successful Raw defense against Shayna Baszler, but a win over Natalya on "The Grandest Stage Of Them All" could propel Morgan to far greater heights.

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For Jacob Fatu, family and respect are more important than anything else. While proudly upholding the Fatu-Anoa'i legacy, he's battled his way to the top of Major League Wrestling. Fatu dishes on his famous family and reveals his true feelings about his biggest rivals.
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Keith Lee worked his tail off for years on the independent scene. Now, after multiple false starts, he's won the NXT North American title. Lee candidly discusses his career so far ... and the one big match that could finally put him on top.
- 41 WRESTLEMANIA 36: THE *REAL* WINNERS & LOSERS**
This year's WrestleMania was unlike any other. From the unconventional venue to big title changes—and a pair of strangely cinematic matches—we dive deep into this year's show. Plus, we go beneath the surface to reveal the *real* winners and losers of each match.

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COVER DESIGN:

LAURA BRUBAKER

BEFORE the BELL

COMPILED BY MIKE BESSLER

THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

Elevating the feats of mere mortals to legend, each generation passes on the stories of their greatest heroes to new generations. From the era of the ancient Olympics to modern sports leagues, history swells with tales of these superhuman athletes. And arguably no sportsman has benefited more from the traditions of folklore than Andre the Giant. In their new book, *The Eighth Wonder Of The World*, writers Bertrand Hebert and Pat Laprade undertake the decidedly daunting task of documenting the late wrestler's storied life.

The story of Andre Roussimoff, who would eventually assume the *nom de guerre* Andre the Giant, begins with a visit to Europe in the early 20th century, as the authors discuss the evolution of the Roussimoff family from before the Great War to the time of Andre's birth. It doesn't take long for one of the most pervasive themes of this book to shine through—namely, that when it comes to the best-known, oft-repeated lore about Andre, much of what we think we know isn't based in reality.

Was Andre the biggest athlete of his era? Did he actually hail from the French Alps? Was he really undefeated heading into his career-defining bout with Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania 3? Of course, most wrestling fans already know that there was considerable fudgery afoot when it came to billing, booking, and selling a unique attraction like Andre. But what Hebert and Laprade offer through their work is careful and deliberate unpacking of the “hows” and the “whys” behind the many facets of the Andre mythos. Sometimes, though, the true stories turn out to be even stranger than the fabricated tales. Take, for example, Andre's face-to-face meeting with Saddam Hussein in 1971, or his penchant for playfully torturing those around him with his formidable

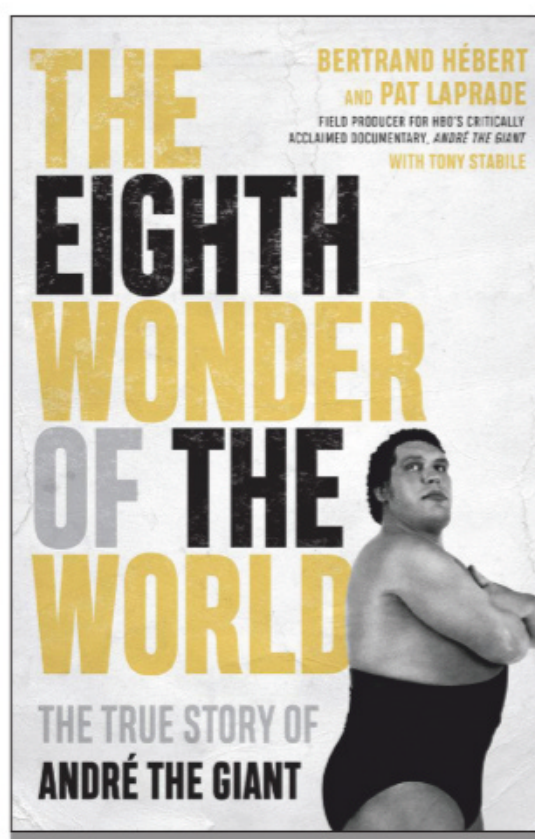
flatulence. Just beyond the most sensational aspects of Andre's life are some of his darker struggles, including his excessive drinking, feelings of isolation and alienation, and the rigors of his affliction with acromegaly (the medical condition that caused his extraordinary physique).

The Eighth Wonder Of The World offers a deep dive into hitherto underappreciated periods of Andre's work in the squared circle, including his early matches in Japan and his appearances throughout

Canada and the United States before the ascendancy of Vince McMahon's WWF. Fans of *The Princess Bride*, Andre's most memorable venture into mainstream culture, will surely delight in the attention given to the film by the authors, who spend a whole chapter on the topic.

The respective pedigrees of wrestling historians Hebert and Laprade are on full display in *The Eighth Wonder Of The World*, as their work reflects the hallmarks of two writers with both an indisputable passion for wrestling and a prominent flair for language. Dedicated wrestling fans will particularly enjoy the authors' commitment to exploring every facet of Andre's legend.

The Eighth Wonder Of The World tells the story of one of wrestling's most loved and celebrated performers with commendable skill and noteworthy attention to detail. We give it four out of five suplexes.



TALKIN' TRASH

Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling-related items you've been talking about lately and our gut reaction to each:

10. WWE films WrestleMania 36 before an empty Performance Center.

Hot on the heels of the Elimination Chamber show, this year's 'Mania effectively constitutes WWE's first-ever "Isolation Chamber" event.

9. Jim Cornette's co-host, Brian Last, claims that Cornette finally signed up for the WWE Network.

Explaining the surprise move, Cornette said that he'd lost a bet and was forced to choose between buying a 10-year subscription to the network or saying one nice thing about Joey Janela.

8. Braun Strowman puts out a tweet suggesting independent wrestlers don't deserve financial support during the COVID-19 crisis.

In lieu of sensitivity training, Triple H enrolled Braun in a remedial economics course at Full Sail University.

7. Brodie Lee is revealed as AEW's "Exalted One."

Lee was relieved when AEW creative withdrew a previous proposal for him to portray a maniacal health food guru known as "The Unsalted One."

6. Fans are grossed out when Shayna Baszler takes a bite out of Becky Lynch's neck.

While the spectacle ranked low on wrestling's Muta Scale (a 1-10 rating of how much blood was shed), it garnered the highest score ever via the Gangrel Rubric.

5. The XFL cancels the remainder of games for the season due to concerns regarding COVID-19 and the need for social distancing.

Although the move was made out of an abundance of caution, staff at XFL venues were quick to note that there were more than enough empty seats in their arenas for all fans to sit at least six feet apart for each and every game.

4. WWE stock continues its months-long plunge.

In an effort to increase liquidity in the market, Vince McMahon has adopted a daily ritual of trying to flush his stock ticker down the toilet.

3. Scott Steiner experiences a medical scare at an Impact Wrestling event.

If there was ever a dude who can defy the odds, it's the guy who once calculated that he had a 141 2/3 percent chance of defeating Samoa Joe.

2. Matt Hardy joins the AEW roster as 3,000-year-old Damascus.

The new persona was apparently developed in an effort to capture the long-neglected demographic of people who believe that they are 3,000 years old.

1. Rob Gronkowski celebrates his debut in WWE with some cringeworthy dancing.

Asked to name the inspiration behind his ringside boogie, Gronk credited the regrettable egg salad sandwich that he had eaten at a gas station earlier that day.



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WE HEARD THAT!

"I really don't want to miss another game that one of my kids is playing or an opportunity to spend time with my wife. There's a lot of that stuff happening, and I've sacrificed a lot. And my family has, as well, so that we can earn a living doing this. The end goal, of course, is to retire and still be able to walk and run and do things with your kids and your family."

—AJ STYLES on the eventuality of hanging up his boots, during Episode 137 of The PWI Podcast

"The hardest thing about the match with Owen that people overlook is that we'd never wrestled each other before. When you've never danced with someone before, you don't know what you're

going to get. For our first match, that was a really good match."

—BRET HART to SI.com, discussing the enduring appeal of his WrestleMania 10 match against his late brother Owen

"As much as I loved having pink hair and a blue tongue, you need to grow up at some point ... So I had a nine-month hiatus of self-discovery and hair dye."

—LIV MORGAN, to CBS New York about the evolution of her in-ring persona

"He's a jerk, but he's funny."

—Proud dad STEVEN FRIEDMAN, reflecting on what it's like to be the father of AEW's MJF, in an interview with Newsday

ONE TO WATCH: TONY DEPPEN

There was a time when calling someone a “punk” was a smear of considerable umbrage. In barroom brawls and on silver screens, the John Waynes and Kirk Douglasses of the world spouted the maligned term as a precursor to throwing down. These days, grappler Tony Deppen embraces the word as an apt description of both his personal identity and worldview, proudly wearing the label into battle in the ring.

Deppen’s dad took him to his first wrestling show in the early-1990s, an unforgettable experience that instantly made him a huge fan. He tried his hand at scholastic wrestling in middle school, but lost enthusiasm for it as his interest in hardcore punk music grew. As a teenager, he encountered the backyard wrestling scene in Eastern Pennsylvania, discovering a subculture that effectively married the action-packed spectacle of pro wrestling with the intensity of hardcore punk.

“They went hand in hand,” Deppen said. “That’s what I still love about the independent wrestling scene. It’s super-DIY, and it’s really underground. It’s a punk rock mentality.”

Deppen became immersed in this underground culture via Backyard Wrestling Link, a worldwide internet forum also frequented by the likes of Alex Zayne and Will Ospreay. The backyard shows that Deppen was involved with grew steadily in size, eventually bringing in audiences of 50 to 60 fans per show. But, as many of Deppen’s peers matured, they set out to explore more traditional paths.

Deppen followed suit, training at the Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling Alliance in Mt. Carmel. He made his in-ring debut in 2009, later venturing out into the indie scene of the surrounding region—garnering attention and championships through his work in promotions like TRUE Wrestling, CHIKARA, and Game Changer Wrestling. Appropriately, he put on a breakout performance at GCW’s Backyard Wrestling event last summer, where he tangled with Zayne in a wild bout.

At 5’6” and 165 pounds, Deppen is a deft competitor, drawing inspiration from some of the best cruiserweights in wrestling history, including Dean Malenko and Rey Mysterio Jr. His diverse arsenal of moves also includes copious quantities of technical grappling and MMA moves—making him well-suited for any style of opponent.

Now 31 years old, Deppen still channels the teen angst he experienced as a youthful punk rocker, imagining the music of bands like Bad Brains as he locks up in the ring.

“There’s so much anger and aggression in it, it fits my style,” he said of hardcore punk music. “I love what it pulls out of me.”

Indeed, Deppen has earned a reputation as an irascible and abrasive competitor, arguing with fans and talking trash to his opponents through a contemptuous sneer.

“I’m not cocky,” he says of his in-ring demeanor. “I’m more of a delusional lunatic.”

After working six shows during last year’s raucous WrestleMania weekend, Deppen joined the ranks of indie wrestling’s buzzworthy talents, leading to bookings from Florida to California ... as well as a debut in Japan. He was set to embark on a romp across Europe later this year, but, like so many others in his field, found his plans temporarily derailed by COVID-19.

“I knew taking on wrestling as a profession would bring its ups and downs, but I didn’t know it would be this dramatic,” Deppen admitted. “But we’ll be okay, and it’ll be back. And when wrestling comes back, I’m going to hit the ground running.”



PHOTO BY CHRIS GRASSO

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: *LUSCIOUS LORI*

Carrying on the family legacy is something of a tall order, even when the task falls upon the broadest of shoulders. But Lori Tovey, the diminutive daughter of Lord Littlebrook, has assumed the responsibility of bringing the life and work of her late father to a new generation of wrestlers and fans.

A tiny titan of the squared circle, Lord Littlebrook held the NWA Midget's championship title three times and appeared in a mixed-tag bout at WrestleMania 3. He was voted *PWI*'s "Midget Wrestler Of The Year" in 1976. To be sure, use of the term is generally frowned upon these days, but Tovey—a self-described "proud midget"—happily embraces the word.

"My dad raised us to be proud of who we are and to not let height restrict us in any way," Tovey explained.

During the course of a career spanning almost a half-century, Lord Littlebrook paid his own success forward by training aspiring wrestlers at his home in St. Joseph, Missouri. Sadly, Littlebrook moved out of the house in 2006 due to health issues. And while his family retains ownership of the property to this day, the premises have long since fallen into disrepair.

Tovey and her family have long hoped to bring local wrestling and training opportunities back to their community of St. Joseph, but their plans were sidelined when her dad passed away in 2016. The following year, her brother Bobby—who also toured the world as the accomplished grappler Beautiful Bobby Dean—died unexpectedly.

Today, Tovey has decided to revisit the effort in hopes that she can restore her dad's former digs to a fully functional training facility and new base of operations. In addition to honoring her father, she also hopes to realize the aspirations of her late brother.

"I feel like Bobby didn't get to fulfill my dad's dream to put on shows in the area and to get his own kids trained," she said.

Known to wrestling fans as Luscious Lori, Tovey has ventured into the ring herself on occasion, earning championship gold in her most recent foray. She defeated Boink the Clown to win the women's title

at the inaugural Little People of Wrestling show earlier this year.

"It meant a lot to me," she said. "The first thing I thought was that I hope my dad and my brother are looking down from heaven and smiling at me."

Tovey recently began the difficult task of remodeling the Littlebrook family home in an effort to convert the property into a boarding house and gym—complete with the very ring that her dad once kept in their garage. She is also sifting through a collection of family-owned memorabilia related to other legendary little people, including Little Beaver and Sky Low Low.

Tovey has already jumped into the ambitious rehab project, relying on YouTube tutorials to guide her through basic interior improvements. She has also launched a "Midgets' Memorial House" crowdfunding endeavor via Facebook, in hopes that she can eventually garner enough support and materials to someday share her family's vision with the world. □



PHOTO BY ABIGAIL CANNON

RINGSIDE

WITH HARRY BURKETT

COVID-19, THE coronavirus that continues to rampage throughout the world, has infected the very bloodstream of our economy, our culture, and our sports, including professional wrestling. In the U.S., states and local municipalities have enforced social distancing guidelines that prohibit gatherings of more than 10 people, which makes it impossible to have live audiences and even limits the work of television production crews.

How long will this continue?

In the best-case scenarios, Major League Baseball could start in early-June, and the National Hockey League and the National Basketball Association could resume in July. The U.S. Tennis Association still plans to hold the U.S. Open from

late-August through mid-September, although the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows, New York, was being converted into a temporary medical facility.

U.S. President **Donald Trump** hosted a conference call with 13 commissioners and executives from major American sports, including WWE Chairman and CEO **Vince McMahon**. Trump urged them to be ready to resume spectator events as soon as health conditions warrant. According to *The Washington Post*, however, Trump refused to commit to a specific date, even as far off as August, in regard to full attendance in arenas and stadiums.

"But I think it's going to be sooner rather than later," said Trump.

"We're not going to have separation for the rest of our times on the planet."

Creativity and innovation will be necessary to keep sports vibrant during these challenging times. Pro wrestling, specifically WWE and AEW, has set an example for how spectator sports can be presented without spectators. WrestleMania 36 was, undoubtedly, the most ambitious attempt yet. No 80,000 fans, no live gate, no merchandise sales ... but WrestleMania charged ahead, banking on a million-plus captive fans viewing at home.

The NBA and MLB were considering games without fans, but there's still the concern of the coronavirus spreading through locker rooms and training camps. To wit, one positive test led to the shutdown of the entire NBA in March.

Wrestling events without fans could be a reality throughout the summer. Lifting stay-at-home orders and allowing people to return to work while still observing social distancing guidelines is the top priority, followed perhaps by a lifting of the ban on small gatherings, from church congregations to Kiwanis Club meetings.

Then maybe we could see sporting events with 50 people or less. Allowing tens of thousands of people to gather in arenas and stadiums probably won't happen until the pandemic is declared over. In regard to whether stadium events might be held by September in California, for example, Governor **Gavin Newsom** replied, "I'm not anticipating that happening in this state."

The major fear is large gatherings could encourage COVID-19 to regain strength in the fall. After all, a championship soccer match attended by 40,000 fans in Milan—pitting the Italian team of Atalanta vs. the Spanish club Valencia—was a flashpoint that helped precipitate

PHOTO BY GEORGE NAPOLITANO



Vince McMahon leaves Donald Trump hanging during a hallway meeting prior to WrestleMania 23 in 2007. President Trump held a conference call with major sports heads, including McMahon, to discuss a roadmap back to live competition.



Trent Beretta superplexes Kenny Omega during a no-audience show at Daily's Place in Jacksonville. After the stay-at-home order was issued in Florida, AEW moved its tapings to Georgia.

the coronavirus crisis ... contributing to more than 17,000 deaths in Italy (as of press time).

WWE's staging of *Raw*, *NXT*, *Smackdown*, and *WrestleMania* at the Performance Center in Orlando has served as a model for other sports. One venue acts as a quarantine zone of sorts, and, with proper hygienic and testing protocols, is safer than holding events at various arenas. The NBA could follow WWE's lead for its playoffs.

Just as we were going to press, however, Governor **Ron DeSantis** imposed a stay-at-home order in Florida, limiting gatherings to 10 people or less. So, right now, even the Performance Center isn't a sure bet.

AEW, anticipating the shutdown in Florida, moved its television tapings from Daily's Place in Jacksonville to Norcross, Georgia, where an incredible number of matches—somewhere between 20 and 30—were recorded for upcoming editions of *Dynamite* ... just before the midnight curfew signaling the shutdown of non-essential businesses in the Peach State. An eight-man tournament to determine the first TNT champion was held at the tapings,

except the final, which was slated for *Double or Nothing* on May 23.

According to *Pro Wrestling Torch*, a Georgia state official was on hand to ensure AEW followed the rules regarding social distancing, while never having more than 10 people in one space. AEW implemented a smart strategy of dividing its roster into two groups, one consisting of primarily Southeast-based talent that

could easily make the tapings, and the other group comprised of everyone else, which stayed home. This way, if anyone on the Southeast roster had been infected with the virus, thereby necessitating isolation of the entire group, then the other half of the roster could participate at the next set of tapings.

Thank goodness The Elite and The Inner Circle know how to create their own content. AEW may need it!

COVID-19 has dealt a financial body blow to the entire economy, including the wrestling industry. WWE stock was already in trouble before the pandemic hit the U.S., due to the exits of Co-Presidents **George Barrios** and **Michelle Wilson**, and Vince McMahon's revelation that he was in the market to allow other streaming services to carry WWE's major pay-per-views. The reality of the virus hit on March 16, forcing WWE stock to tumble toward \$30 per share.

With live-event revenue eliminated, in particular *WrestleMania*, investors are braced for WWE's second-quarter report to be rough.



Roman Reigns unfairly took a lot of heat for pulling out of his scheduled *WrestleMania 36* Universal title challenge of Goldberg. Considering Reigns' medical history, it was an easy call.



Jay and Mark Briscoes' classic brother vs. brother match from June 2013's *Best in the World* was replayed as part of a special episode of *Ring Of Honor Wrestling* broadcast during the pandemic.

McMahon sold shares of his WWE common stock on March 24 to help provide liquidity for the company during this trying time. The value of WWE stock dropped by 3.9 percent as a result of the sale, with at least a few analysts touting a buying opportunity.

The performers in our great industry add a human dimension to all of this. Wrestling is a contact sport, and each man and woman risks exposure every time they step into the ring.

That was driven home by **Roman Reigns'** gutsy decision to sit out 'Mania 36. Reigns cited his family situation, and we all know that his own immunity was compromised during his second battle with leukemia less than two years ago. **Braun Strowman** was tapped as his last-minute replacement, with oddly little fanfare or explanation from WWE, to challenge Universal champion **Bill Goldberg** at WrestleMania.

Reigns, not WWE, made the announcement—and it was obvious the “Big Dog” had read some social media posts that made him barking mad. “You don’t know what else is going on in my

life,” said a seething Reigns. “You don’t know if I have newborns. You don’t know if I have family in my household, older family. So, yeah, like the old saying, man, go and flip that cover over and read a few pages, get into a few chapters before you go running your mouth and just take this time to better yourself.”

Obviously, the Internet trolls had gotten to Roman. His barrage continued: “It’s funny, because for years now, man, for years, people have been like, ‘Don’t show up at WrestleMania, we don’t want you in it.’ You know what I mean? There’s, like, a nice handful of dudes and haters that didn’t want me there, but the moment I made a choice for me and my family, I’m a coward, I’m a sissy ... a lot of different things that I am now. But you don’t know the whole story.”

Reigns might have been influenced by **Rey Mysterio Jr.’s** move to self-quarantine after exhibiting symptoms consistent with coronavirus. Both men should be applauded for their respective decisions.

Most promotions have received high marks for their

creativity during the crisis. WWE went first with no-audience events, and AEW interspersed a number of pre-taped packages between its matches—somewhat unusual for wrestling broadcasts but completely consistent with pre-game shows for mainstream sports.

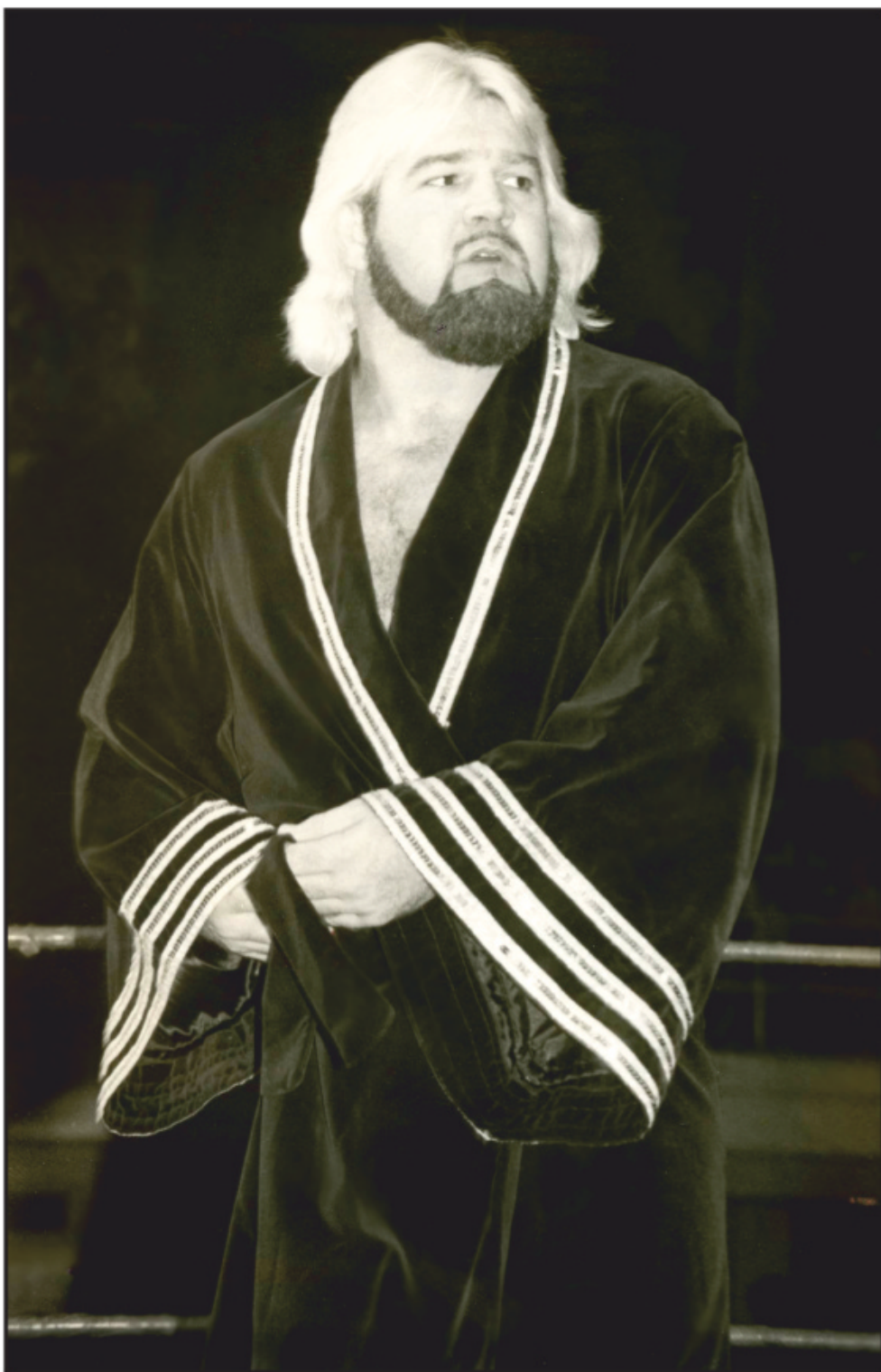
ROH went the “best of” route for its *Ring Of Honor Wrestling* programs, but with an interesting twist. Each episode focused on a different wrestler or tag team. Its March 27 episode highlighted **Jay** and **Mark Briscoe**, and took viewers to the brothers’ family farm in Delaware. In addition to in-depth personal interviews, the show featured Jay’s ROH title defense against Mark from 2013, plus their successful tag team title defense against **Kevin Steen** (**Kevin Owens**) and **El Generico** (**Sami Zayn**) from 2007.

Other wrestlers featured included **Jay Lethal**, **PCO**, **Matt Taven**, and **Flip Gordon**.

Matches for several episodes of *Impact Wrestling* had been taped before the pandemic hit North America, although some clever editing and new voiceover work had to be done for the shows to make sense when they aired on AXS-TV in March and April. As with all other promotions, it’s hard to say where Impact’s creative direction is headed right now.

Before we part, I’d like to acknowledge the death of Pacific Northwest legend **Rip Oliver**, who passed away on March 5. Oliver had entered hospice care for end-stage heart failure earlier this year. He was 67 years old.

Oliver grew up near Florida’s Homosassa River, where his parents owned a seafood business, and made his wrestling debut in 1975. He beat **Brett Sawyer** for his first Pacific Northwest title in 1982 and would become the promotion’s most dominant champion over the next five years, winning the PNW belt a record



The wrestling community mourns the death of Rip Oliver, who passed away at age 67 from heart failure. Oliver was a big draw in the Pacific Northwest and Texas in the 1980s.

12 times. Oliver traded the title with **Rocky Johnson**, **Billy Jack Haynes**, **Cocoa Samoa**, **The Assassin**, and **Ricky Santana**, and faced other Northwest greats such as **Stan Stasiak**, **Roddy Piper**, **Bobby Jagers**, **Curt Hennig**, and **Brian Adams**. He held the PNW tag team championship a record 16 times, including reigns with **Buddy Rose** and son **Larry Oliver**, and the Canadian tag title twice.

"The Crippler" became the promotion's top heel after Rose left for the WWF in the

early-1980s. When Rose returned to the Northwest, the two men clashed and "The Playboy" became a huge fan favorite.

Oliver made a brief foray into Texas to beat his old nemesis, Haynes, for the World Class TV title in 1985 and wrestled for the WWF as a preliminary wrestler on occasion. His last in-ring triumph was one more Pacific Northwest title win over **Steve Doll** in 1991. He retired shortly thereafter.

That's all for now. Save a ringside seat for me. □

NEWS ANALYSIS

WRESTLEMANIA, REALLY?

I'll state the obvious: WrestleMania 36 didn't feel like WrestleMania. WWE deserves an A+ for effort, considering the dire circumstances. I was very disappointed, however, in the two world title matches: Braun Strowman's Universal title win over Bill Goldberg and Drew McIntyre's WWE title victory over Brock Lesnar. A combined total time of seven minutes? Come on, guys.

FEELS LIKE WWE POWERRR

Actually, WWE could learn from *NWA Powerrr*. The initial *Smackdown* without fans featured Bayley and Sasha Banks vs. Alexa Bliss and Nikki Cross in a match that saw all four women perform in the typical over-the-top WWE style, with Nikki even stomping the mat for imaginary crowd reactions. WWE has yet to truly tone it down and embrace this newfound intimacy with home viewers.

BELIEVE IN THE FIGHT

John Cena deflected boos with nonchalance and good cheer. Cena probably didn't like it, but he so believed that he was WWE's top star that he didn't feel the need to lash out. Roman Reigns feels insecure in the spot that was intended for him, and that's because he lets criticism rattle him. Ignore social media and take your own advice, Roman: Fight. Overcome. Believe.

RIP TORE IT UP

It's hard to pinpoint Rip Oliver's most dastardly deed. Was it persuading Dynamite Kid to double-cross Buddy Rose and join his Army? Or was it during Christmastime 1983, when he disguised himself as Santa Claus, handed out gifts to fans between matches at the Portland Sports Arena, and then pulled out a tire iron to bludgeon Billy Jack Haynes? What wholesome family entertainment!

QUICK COUNT

BY AL CASTLE

EVEN THOUGH IT ultimately didn't take place at Raymond James Stadium—home of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers—the pirate theme WWE chose for WrestleMania 36 was especially fitting this year. After all, as WWE tried its best to put on the biggest show of the year amid the COVID-19 pandemic, what image could be more fitting than a ship stranded at sea?

Ahoy! Enjoy this pirate-inspired edition of "Quick Count." And, on behalf of the entire *PWI* family, we hope that all our readers *arr* doing okay.

ABANDON SHIP

As the COVID-19 situation became more and more grave by the day, it became harder and harder for anyone to defend WWE's decision to go on with WrestleMania 36 despite the potential health risks.

Even as nearly every other form of professional sports and entertainment shut down as a precaution against the pandemic, WWE—and AEW, too, for that matter—stubbornly decided the rules didn't apply to them.

And although playing in front of empty arenas may have shielded fans from exposure to the virus, it did little to protect WWE talent,

who continued for weeks to put themselves at risk by traveling and wrestling one another, including at WrestleMania.

Surely, many a wrestling fan was selfishly happy that WWE decided the show must go on. But the company lost the support—and maybe even the respect—of many others, for whom the long-term health of their favorite stars was more important than their short-term entertainment.

ANCHORS AWEIGH

Despite the health concerns associated with continuing to put on matches throughout the pandemic, WWE and AEW undoubtedly provided much-needed escapist entertainment to viewers looking for an alternative to the distressing news reports that dominated TV in the early spring.

And at the frontline of those efforts were both companies' announce teams. On a normal week, play-by-play and color commentators fill an important role by providing a soundtrack to the matches before them. But, much like network news anchors, during uncertain times wrestling announcers

Even as millions of Americans practiced social distancing, the bodies of WWE stars (like Otis Dozovic and The Miz) continued to collide on a weekly basis.



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In a playful moment, Michael Cole lets Triple H “touch up” his facial hair. Cole’s enthusiastic commentary provides solace for WWE fans in uncertain times.

can provide something even more important: comfort.

Even as WWE scaled down its production to include fewer personnel (and fewer matches) throughout the public health emergency, lead announcer Michael Cole found himself as busy as ever, working twice as hard to inject enthusiasm, energy, and normalcy into a TV product that desperately needed it.

By reminding wrestling fans that there is still a world outside of quarantines and emergency rooms, Cole, along with his fellow announcers in WWE, conveyed an important message without ever actually saying it: “Everything is going to be okay.”

SWAB THE DECK

The coronavirus outbreak has helped shine a light on the sanitary conditions of pro wrestling facilities. And, if you wielded an ultraviolet light, you’d probably be disgusted with what you’d see.

With dozens of half-naked men and women grinding and sweating all over the canvas each day, wrestling rings can be a breeding ground for all sorts of bacteria—particularly at a heavily used training facility like the WWE Performance Center.

On the WWE Network’s recent documentary about the defunct Florida Championship Wrestling

developmental company, the Bella Twins casually recalled a “ringworm outbreak” during their training days. Both got infections on their faces. Yuck.

Hopefully, WWE officials took extra measures to disinfect the rings, and other surfaces inside the Performance Center, throughout the pandemic. Pro wrestling is dangerous enough with just one opponent in the ring, let alone millions of microscopic ones.

PLUNDER

At just 17,000 square feet—and without any fans in attendance—WWE’s Performance Center was not the ideal venue to put on televised wrestling content. But what the “PC” lacked in size, it more than made up for in potential for good, old-fashioned violence.

Several wrestlers attempted to exploit that potential throughout WWE’s televised run in the Orlando, Florida, facility during the COVID-19 pandemic. A brawl between Johnny Gargano and Tommaso Ciampa inside the Performance Center spilled into a conference room, a medical bay, and a gym, and included weapons like a laptop computer, framed art, and dumbbells.

A couple of weeks later, King Corbin tossed Elias from an elevated perch during an episode of *Smackdown*. Meanwhile, other

heated rivalries spilled into the narrow hallways of the PC.

Kudos to WWE’s wrestlers for having made the most of the constraints of their temporary television home. They really thought outside the box—even if it meant picking up the box and hitting someone with it.

HIDDEN TREASURE

Wrestling fans looking for new viewing content during the coronavirus shutdown may have stumbled on a familiar face on YouTube, and, in doing so, discovered one of wrestling’s most underappreciated stars.

With its YouTube series, *Powerrrr*, on hold because of the outbreak, the National Wrestling Alliance used its weekly timeslot on March 24 to air a 20-minute Q&A with NWA heavyweight champion Nick Aldis. For fans who hadn’t followed the resurgence of the Billy Corgan-led NWA, the idea of an interview with the former Magnus may have been nothing to get excited about. But, once he appeared on the screen, it became quickly apparent that this was not the man they remembered.

As sharply dressed as Ric Flair in his prime, and with microphone skills to match, the “National Treasure” has been nothing short of a revelation in NWA. And, despite already having 12 years of exposure on national television, the holder of the venerated “Ten Pounds Of Gold” is still in his early-30s.

The 20-minute question and answer segment may not have showed off his strongest skill—his wrestling—but it did offer some important insight into how Aldis is making the most of the pandemic-forced hiatus.

“There are going to be moments when other stuff takes the conversation and takes oxygen,” Aldis said in response to one question. “The thing I’ve learned about our business is that you have to take advantage of the time when you’ve got some momentum.” □

WIN, LOSE, or DRAW

BY HARRY BURKETT

NO ONE ALIVE today, particularly in North America and Europe, has experienced anything like the COVID-19 pandemic that changed our world this spring. As of this writing, we're living in the age of social distancing and empty arenas. It seems that something wholly unexpected, something impossible to comprehend in advance, hits us with a body blow every generation or so, such as the Great Depression, World War II, the Kennedy assassination, the September 11 attacks, and now the coronavirus.

Raw, *NXT*, *Dynamite*, and *Smackdown* airing live with no fans in attendance. *WrestleMania 36* taking place at the WWE Performance Center. These were unthinkable scenarios less than five months ago.

Professional wrestling has played a unique role in giving

people a much-needed respite from the daily grind of horrible headlines. As every other major sport—including basketball, baseball, and NASCAR—is being shown in repeats, pro wrestling has forged ahead with no fans in the stands, still finding value in providing ongoing content for viewers at home.

It reminds me of 9/11. But unlike a months-long pandemic, the challenge then was for the nation to recover from one horrific day while overcoming concerns of follow-up attacks and mysterious anthrax spores being sent through the mail to political targets.

We weren't told to stay home. Quite the opposite, we were told the best response was to return to everyday routines and spend money to help the economy.

As with the COVID-19 crisis, WWE took the lead in that effort.

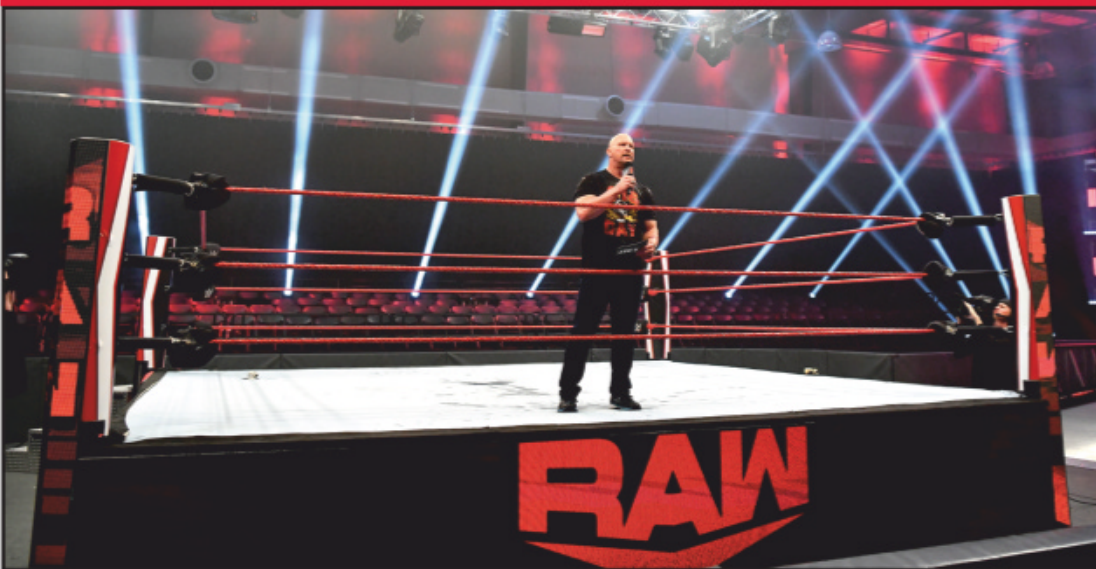
While the *Smackdown* taping scheduled for Houston's Compaq Center on September 11, 2001, was postponed—and, because planes were grounded, performers remained stranded in Texas—WWE consulted with Houston city officials and went live with *Smackdown* at the same venue in its regular Thursday night time slot two nights later.

It was a pep rally, just what the country needed. McMahon opened the program with a rousing speech about the U.S.A., Lilian Garcia gave a stirring rendition of the national anthem, Steve Austin delivered a heartfelt message, and Bradshaw gave voice to the strong emotions that a lot of Americans were feeling. That became the tone of WWE programming, culminating with former U.S. Olympian Kurt Angle—who personified the nation's patriotic spirit at the time—defeating Austin for the World title in his hometown of Pittsburgh on September 23.

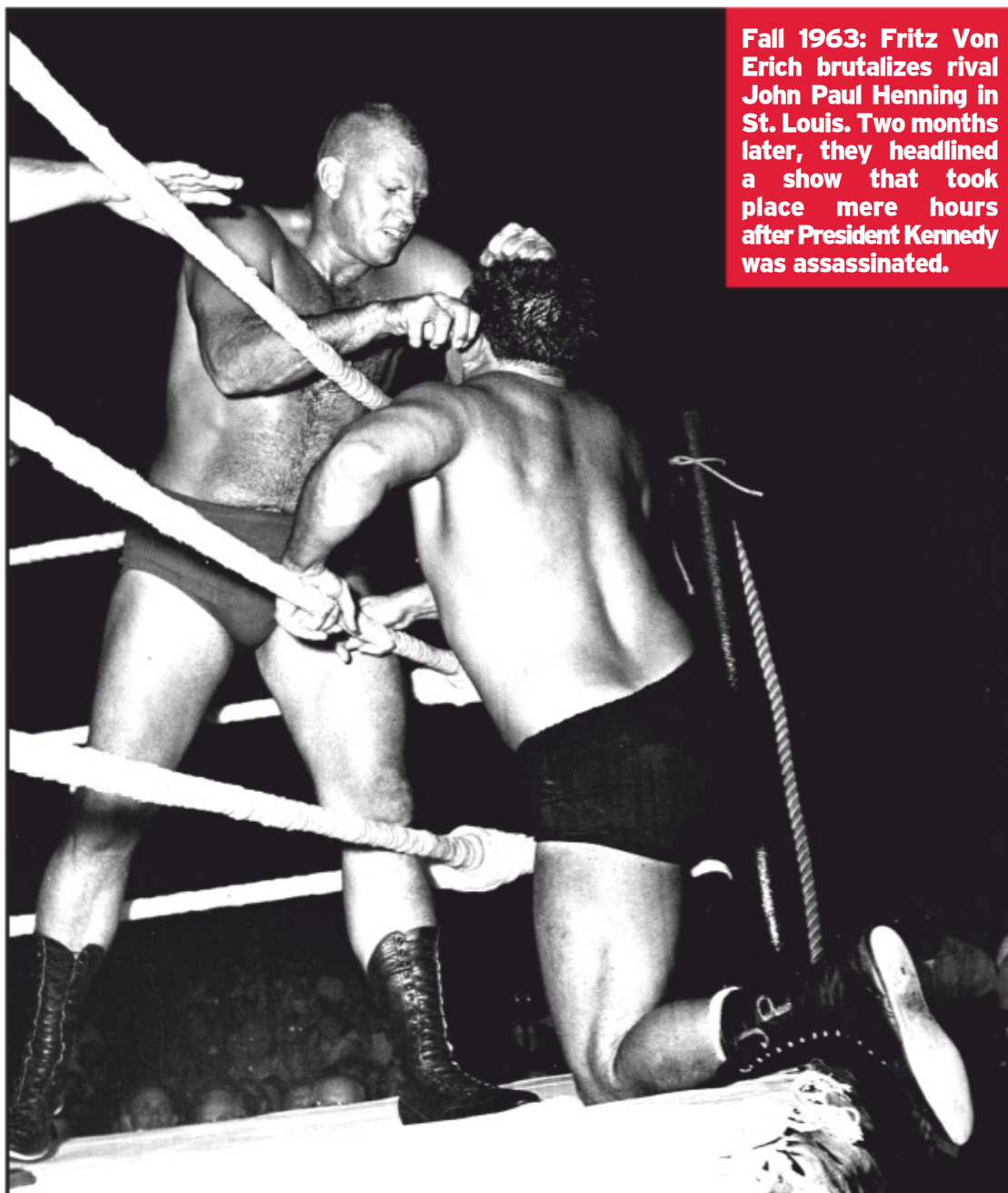
Unfortunately, the template for doing a live show during a crisis was already there. Many comparisons were made between the September 13 broadcast of *Smackdown* and the Owen Hart tribute edition of *Raw* two years earlier. McMahon was criticized for his “show must go on” mentality when he refused to halt the company's Over the Edge pay-per-view after Hart's fatal fall. The following night's *Raw*, however, received tremendous acclaim. Matches and storylines became secondary, as superstars shared their real feelings. The experience was cathartic for talent and fans alike.

I wondered how the industry had dealt with previous crises. For example, what happened after John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963? Did wrestling cards go on as planned that night? What was the reaction?

At the WWE Performance Center, Steve Austin speaks into the microphone, not for the benefit of fans in attendance—there were none—but for the audience watching at home.



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Fall 1963: Fritz Von Erich brutalizes rival John Paul Henning in St. Louis. Two months later, they headlined a show that took place mere hours after President Kennedy was assassinated.

My research found a few instances in which wrestling events were held that evening. The NWA sanctioned a card at the Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo, where Moose Cholak defeated Johnny Barend, “Sailor” Art Thomas beat The Great Mephisto, and the team of Billy Lyons and Hans Schmidt defeated Doc and Mike Gallagher in the two-out-of-three-falls main event.

Likewise, Sam Muchnick went ahead with his event in St. Louis, with Rip Hawk and Fritz Von Erich defeating Ronnie Etchison and John Paul Henning in the main event. Other big names included “Cowboy” Bob Ellis, Dick the Bruiser, Karl Gotch, Bulldog Brower, Joe Blanchard, Angelo Poffo, and Emile Dupree.

In his autobiography, *King Of The Ring: The Harley Race Story*, the eight-time NWA champion recalled pleading with Dory Funk Sr. to cancel a show near Lovington,

Texas. “Not only was the President killed here in our own state, but he was a Catholic,” argued Race. “The state has tons of Hispanics, and they’re all Catholic. Christ wrestling the Devil won’t draw a crowd tonight.” Race remembered it was a small turnout.

Future World Class announcer Bill Mercer was in a unique position that day. He worked for Dallas station KRLD, where he covered the assassination as a television reporter. And he thought the Jim Garvin-Sunshine-Precious love triangle was tough to cover?

World War II had an unprecedented effect on our country, our culture, and pro wrestling. The great Lou Thesz put his career on hold, becoming a corporal in the U.S. Army and impressing his fellow soldiers with his grappling skills while stationed at Fort Lewis in Washington state. “Wild” Bill Longson reigned as World

champion for most of Thesz’ absence, defending the title in St. Louis, Montreal, and other wrestling capitals.

Obviously, many people in the wrestling fraternity were also members of the Greatest Generation. Paul Boesch earned a Purple Heart while in the Army, Verne Gagne did underwater demolition while in the Navy, Karl Von Hess was also a Navy diver working in underwater demolition (for the U.S., not the Nazis), and Lord James Blears was in the British Navy in the Pacific.

There were casualties, too. One of the most notable was rugged John Gacek, a Minneapolis native who wrestled in Georgia, California, and Wisconsin, and also toured Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand. His top opponents included Longson and Rudy Kay. According to *Slam! Wrestling*, Gacek was a member of the famed 327th Glider Infantry and was killed while fighting along the Lower Rhine River in Holland on November 12, 1944.

The worst tragedy occurred on March 3, 1945, when six wrestlers—who were part of a USO wrestling tour—died in a plane crash midway through a flight from England to Paris. George Mack, Jack Ross, Gerald “Kid” Chapman, Al Sabath, Gaius Young, and Ben Reuben were among the dead. All six men worked for Chicago promoter Fred Kohler, who later held a benefit show for the wrestlers’ widows and children. Al Williams, who was part of the troupe but was not on the plane, headlined the event.

Our industry has a history of rising to the challenge during moments of crisis. But exactly how to respond isn’t always obvious. Does the show go on? Do we stop the show out of respect? Do we put our performers in harm’s way?

There are usually more questions than answers during tough times, and the coronavirus pandemic is no different. □

HOTSEAT

AN INCISIVE INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF THE SPORT'S TOP STARS

IT'S A WRESTLING cliché that fans have heard countless times over the years, with varying levels of genuineness: "We've never seen anyone like [insert name here]."

But, in the case of Nyla Rose, it's especially true.

As the first openly transgender performer to sign with a major wrestling company, Rose is breaking new barriers in the sport. In an era when women's wrestling continues to be redefined, Rose, who began her in-ring career presenting as a man, has gone a step further by redefining what it means to be a woman wrestler.

Rose achieved another historic milestone in February, when she defeated Riho to become the second AEW Women's champion. But even if you didn't know Rose's backstory—and many fans don't—it's hard not to be impressed by the 37-year-old Washington, D.C., native. With formal training both in acting and martial arts, Rose presents a combination of legitimacy, showmanship, and dedication that many a wrestling promoter would covet.

Despite the outsized on-screen persona of the "Native Beast," Rose, who fell in love with wrestling as a child, remains humble and hungry to learn.

Surrounded in AEW's women's division by world-class workers like Riho, veterans like Emi Sakura, and budding prospects like Kris Statlander, Rose knows she has to work doubly hard to keep up ... and to keep her title.

In this recent interview with **PWI** Senior Writer Al Castle, Rose discusses the steep "learning curve" she's faced in the first year of AEW's existence, the changing face of women's wrestling, and the pride she feels in representing more than one disenfranchised group of people.

**NYLA
ROSE**

PHOTO BY SADIEL "SPEEDY" RUIZ/AEW

Castle: How is AEW in terms of maintaining a personal life? The reputation for pro wrestling, and certainly WWE, for so long has been that, if you want to have a personal life, a family life, a marriage, then this isn't the lifestyle for you. But I feel AEW has changed that so much.

Rose: Yeah, so that's kind of how the life of a pro wrestler is. You make that sacrifice of a personal life for your career. It's still pretty tricky to navigate that, but AEW is definitely a little bit more conducive to having a personal life. Once I signed, for the first time in probably like eight years, I actually had a Saturday off. I didn't know what to do with myself.

Castle: Are you worried about that changing as AEW grows and gets more successful? There's talk now of maybe adding a second show. Is that something exciting for you, or do you worry about not being able to have a life outside of wrestling?

Rose: I'm definitely excited about it. Like I said, I kind of got used to it. It's just the life of a pro wrestler. And, the greater the sacrifice, the greater the rewards, right? So, if we're getting a second TV show—and who knows what comes after that—I'm definitely willing to give that up, because there's always room for creating a little bit of fun, especially when we're traveling to these new towns. You get to see the country a little bit.

Castle: Is this whole AEW experience more than you



Rose feels that AEW's women's division has gotten a bit of a bad rap, especially since so many of the company's stars are competing on weekly television for the first time.

expected? We're just over a year now from it being announced, and less than that since the first show. And I know the vision was this grand vision. But it wouldn't be the first startup to claim that they're going to be the next big thing, and, then in a few weeks, they're not doing much of anything. So is it fair to say that it's exceeded your expectations?

Rose: I would say it's a slow process, a slow build. We're a new company. I think a lot of

people get bored with us being in the age that we live in now, with all the instant gratification. You post something on Instagram or Twitter and three seconds later, you've got 100 likes. If you go to the DMV and it takes five minutes, you want to pull your hair out. People forget we're a new company. We're a new business. It takes that slow build. And I think we're doing that just fine. We're testing things out, getting some feedback, seeing what works,

"I definitely wish [my gender identity] wasn't a part of the story, because it's such a minuscule part of who I am. There's so many more facets to my life, to my personality, to who I am."

what doesn't work, making those adjustments, so that, in the next year and the year after that, we're able to just hit it full throttle and blow everything completely out of the water.

Castle: I know, fans and writers like me, we're watching the ratings every week to see who won. There's definitely a spirit of competition from observers on the outside between AEW and NXT, or WWE in general. Do you feel that in the locker room?

Rose: I think there's always a

spirit of healthy competition. And I think there's actually nothing wrong with that. I'm in competition with all my co-workers in the sense that they're going to help bring me up to their level and I'm going to help bring them up to my level. We're just going to keep pushing each other to be the best version of ourselves that we can be. And I'm in competition with myself. I want to make sure that I'm doing better this week than I did last week. It just breeds motivation. Where it becomes

unhealthy is when you start obsessing over numbers. And, you know, you just kind of start playing dirty, if you will. That's not good. That's not healthy. That doesn't do anything.

Castle: Where do you see the women's division? For all the praise that's been heaped on AEW, probably the one place that's been criticized the most is the women's division, just in terms of some of the athletes not being as far along, some of the matches not being as polished as you might see elsewhere. Is that a fair criticism?

Rose: I think it's a little bit not fair. I think people are so used to seeing one style of product, that, when things don't look a certain way, they automatically assume the worst. They have their own assumptions about it, instead of giving it a fair shot, giving us a fair shake. Again, we are a new company. A lot of performers, male and female, have not worked on weekly television before. And I think, in that regard, we're all getting our footing. We're all catching our stride. Look at where everyone is now, compared to Week One. It's only gotten better from there. And it's only going to get better from here. If people were just a little bit more patient and not so critical, I think they would actually enjoy things.

Castle: You won the title on February 12, and obviously you've been in the news a lot because of it. When you see all the stories that focus on your transgender identity, does it make you feel proud to represent your community that way? Or do you wish that wasn't part of the story—that you would just be evaluated as, you know, a badass woman wrestler that is running through the AEW women's division?

Rose: I definitely wish it wasn't a part of the story, because it's

PHOTO BY LEE SOUTH/AEW



While she gets the importance of being the first openly transgender wrestler for a major promotion, Rose would rather people simply recognize her as the "badass" women's wrestler she is.

such a minuscule part of who I am. There's so many more facets to my life, to my personality, to who I am. You don't see now, with African American athletes, their race being at the forefront of everything. But when segregation was a thing and you had African American athletes being the first integrated into mainstream sports ... yeah, it was everywhere. So I get it. I get why it's such a newsworthy item. And I do hope we get to a point where it's not mentioned. They're just kind of like, "Oh yeah, by the way, this happened." But there also is that major sense of pride because you don't see someone like myself portrayed in such a positive way. And, despite all the negativity, it's been received so well among a lot of people, especially in the mainstream.

Castle: If you're going through your Twitter feed, I imagine that, for every bunch of positive tweets, you're going to get that person who is maybe not tolerant, and maybe has not been exposed to a lot of transgender people in their lives and might say some pretty mean things. Does that just kind of stop you in your tracks? How much does that get under your skin?

Rose: Every day is different. Every post is different. They can definitely catch you off guard. I'll make a post. You know, "Hey, this morning I had toast." And someone goes out of their way to come on my page and kind of like tear me down. It's a bit of shock value there. That's like, whoa! Okay. I wasn't expecting that. I was just talking about bread. Like, "I don't know why you're so hateful towards me and bread, but alright." So it does kind of get under your skin a little bit. It does shake you a little bit. But you've got to keep pushing. You know, it's really the only way that you're going to overcome all this



Rose will take on anyone who stands between her and her goals, regardless of gender—whether that's a fellow female athlete like Big Swole (above) or referee Rick Knox (below).



The scowling expression on Nyla Rose's face lets fans know their taunts won't stop her.

PHOTO BY LEE SOUTHA/AEW



Rose: Yeah, it's really silly. It's actually kind of funny, in a way, because so many people think they know what's going on. But they really have no idea. Here in the U.S., I can't think of a single all-women's wrestling school. So every woman that you've seen on TV has probably come up through the ranks training with men. Where's the outrage there? On the independent scene, they've definitely had intergender matches. It happens all the time. Women's matches used to be special attractions. Now, women's wrestling

negativity, all the hatred. It's just kind of like, put it in its place and keep pushing. I don't know what else to say about people being hateful for no other reason than they're uncomfortable. So they push back a little bit because people don't like to be uncomfortable. I think a lot of people are afraid of what that may mean. It doesn't mean a damn thing. It just means you accept a person as a person.

Castle: It's challenging, I imagine, just to be a transgender person. It's extra challenging to be a transgender person in a public job and in front of an audience. And then it's another thing to be on national television, TNT, with millions of fans watching every week. Were you ready for the challenges that were ahead? Have they been more than you expected?

Rose: I was kind of ready. I kind of knew what to expect. But not, I guess, to the degree that it happened. I wasn't ready for that. There is a little bit of a learning curve, if you will. I'll be out somewhere and maybe

somebody will stare at me. And I have to check myself, actually. I'd be, like, "Why is this person staring at me? Do they know about me? Do they know what's going on? Do they know I'm transgender? Or do they think I'm cute and want to talk to me? Do they want an autograph?"

Castle: Was there a point made that this wouldn't be brought up on TV—that it's not part of your character's story?

Rose: There wasn't a point made about it. It just kind of never happened. I guess the biggest thing is, because it's not a part of my character, there's no reason to put it on TV. Nothing comes out of it, you know? It's a part of who I am as a person, but not my character as a wrestler. And our show on TV is about showcasing our wrestling.

Castle: And I would think, once it's part of your character, it would lead to the argument against transgender women in sports—as uneducated as it is, especially when talking about pro wrestling. Unless you address it on TV, you're just another woman.

has found a place in the mainstream market. It's in demand. People love women's wrestling, so it's not a special attraction anymore. So they started doing intergender matches. Where's the outrage over that? You don't see it. But the second a transgender woman comes into the foray, there's outrage everywhere. It makes no sense to me.

Castle: What did you think of Tessa Blanchard winning the heavyweight title over on *Impact*? I think people are more accepting of it than they were a few years ago, but I think there are still people who aren't totally okay with it. There was definitely still uneasiness a couple years ago about the image of men and women fighting each other on TV, especially if you have a man getting offense on a woman.

Rose: I don't see anybody who had that problem watching Marvel movies and Black Widow is beating up 25 dudes. Nobody seems to flinch at that. But the second it's pro wrestling—which, it's no secret, is a form of entertainment, so it's kind of

in the vein of the same thing—people get a little uneasy. I get that it is a little bit more realistic. Nobody has superpowers. But people don't actually stop to think for a second. But I think Tessa winning was great. It's something new. It's a fresh outlook on something we've done a million times. I say sit back and let the story play out, then judge it. Don't go into it hating it right off the break.

Castle: Are you interested in wrestling men? Or, because of your unique situation, do you worry that that ends up being a step backward or opens it up to more misinterpretation?

Rose: There's always going to be misinterpretation for everything I do. I'm kind of in this weird catch-22 situation. And I think I'll always be there. I kind of feel like I'm always damned if I do, damned if I don't. I see no issue with me challenging men, especially if there's a crossover

situation. If I was to work solely in the men's division, it's definitely a problem. But, if I had crossover appeal, then there's nothing wrong there. Chyna did it. You know, so many women have done it. Lita has done it. So why can't I do it?

Castle: How long have you been wrestling now?

Rose: This is my eighth year, I believe.

Castle: Okay, so that's a fair amount of experience. But, obviously, you're in there with some women who have been doing it a lot longer and are further along in their careers. Do you still feel like there's a lot of learning on the job? And is that nerve-racking?

Rose: It's absolutely nerve-racking, but in the best way possible. There's always room to learn, always room to grow. We have people who have been in every promotion you can think of. And they, themselves, still talk

about how they're learning things. So, to think that just because you've had a little bit of experience and have learned a few things, that you know it all, that's completely ludicrous. Wrestling is such an ever-changing, ever-evolving creature, that there's no way to ever know it all. You will forever be learning everything about this sport, especially if you have a certain type of passion that you want to know every aspect of the job. I'm talking to the camera people. I'm talking to the sound guys. I want to know how it all works. I just hope they don't push me out of the way backstage. But I, truly, just want to know how every aspect of this business comes together at this level. Learning is something that always goes on. I love being in there with someone who has had more experience than I have. It does raise me up. It forces me to think outside of the box or get outside of my comfort zone and

PHOTO BY GEORGE NAPOLITANO



Though aggressive and brooding on camera, Rose is grateful for the behind-the-scenes camaraderie of her AEW co-workers.



"The Native Beast" decimates Riho on the night she would ultimately defeat her for the AEW Women's title.

kind of push myself. And I think that's where the magic really is. If you're not uncomfortable, you're not growing.

Castle: I don't know how much this has happened to you, or if it's happened to you, but I think it happens to every wrestler at some point: Something doesn't go quite right in a match, and the fans are vocal about it, and you get the "You F'ed up" chants. How much do you take that to heart? Do you sort of feel like, "Alright. I deserved that. That didn't go quite right"? Or do you want to stop the match and start screaming at the fans for being such jerks?

Rose: That's the beauty of being a bad guy. I *can* stop the match and yell at the fans. When you get those chants and you don't get the reaction that you kind of hope for, it can be a little jarring. The best thing to do is to not get in your own head. And that is way easier said than

done. I don't even know if it has ever been done. You'll always get in your head. But the best thing to do is to try to not get in your head in that moment. Just kind of be like, "Alright. I'm going to be on 'Botchamania' for that one." And then you finish the match, and then go back and figure out what went wrong. But, in that moment, you cannot let it eat you alive. Because that's when you have what I call the "snowball effect." You're trying to proceed with the match, but you're focused on what went wrong. And that's just going to make more stuff go wrong throughout the match. And it's not a good thing.

Castle: What's the support system been like backstage? I saw Dustin Rhodes say really nice things about you, and how he thinks of you sort of like a little sister. Tony Khan, everybody backstage ... what's that group like?

Rose: I can honestly say all of that is 100 percent genuine. And the feeling is absolutely mutual. And, if I'm being quite frank about it, I didn't expect any of that. So it's really kind of tear-jerking and heartwarming to have these people, who you, more or less, just met, really stick their selves out there for you and go to bat for you and just kind of want to see you succeed.

Castle: What did you expect?

Rose: Indifference, I guess, is the best word. You know, here are these people that have done these amazing things in their careers. And here I am coming off the indies. I was not an indie darling. I made a little bit of a name for myself and I did some things, but I absolutely was not everywhere. I'm still on that quest. But to have these people full-on embrace you—someone who's pretty much, for lack of a better word, a nobody—that was what shook my world more than anything.

Castle: Another important part of your identity that maybe people don't focus on as much is your Native American identity. And here's another place where pro wrestling sometimes hasn't had the best track record of representation. So how important is it to you to be out there with your Native American heritage and being sure that it's represented in the proper light? Back in the '70s and '80s, into the '90s, they'd just put a bunch of feathers on someone and call them Native American.

Rose: Definitely, that's a big part of why it was important to me to kind of push that part of myself to the forefront. Like you said, you haven't seen much positivity in that regard. If you were

brown and there were feathers lying around, you were going to be Native American that evening. So to have someone with actual heritage, who knows a bit about their culture, that's really important. And it makes me feel good when I see people online who pick up on that, and they understand and they are supportive of that. When I see actual Native American fans online, who are appreciative, they're like, "Thank you. Thank you for the representation. We don't get that." It's so awesome to see. And the pride I have in myself and in my family and my heritage makes people in the same situation have pride in themselves. And they want to be proud and loud. And that's really awesome.

Castle: In some respects, you've already reached the mountaintop, at least in AEW. So where do you go from here? What are some goals left for you out there?

Rose: I would say retain this championship, have that long, five-year reign. That's never been done.

Castle: I loved that promo you gave where you talked about wanting to be a "one-time" champion. Everybody brags about being a 16-, 17-time champion, which means you lost at least that many times.

Rose: Yeah, the devil's in the details, right? Definitely, definitely in five years, I would love to see myself having picked up an immense amount of knowledge, being able to help bring up new people who are just coming into the light. I would love to be in a position where I could start an all-women's training facility. That's just a personal goal of mine. That's definitely on the top of my docket. But I would love to be in a position where I could do that in the next five years or so and keep doing what I'm doing. I would love to still be able to perform in ring. But I think having some backstage duties might be kind of cool, as well. Before getting into being in front of the camera, I was really big into violent scenes stuff. I did television production in school. So I've always loved being a part of the creative process. This business isn't going to get rid of me that easy. □

Nyla Rose wants to have an epic reign as AEW Women's champ—and it's going to take an incredible opponent to stop her.

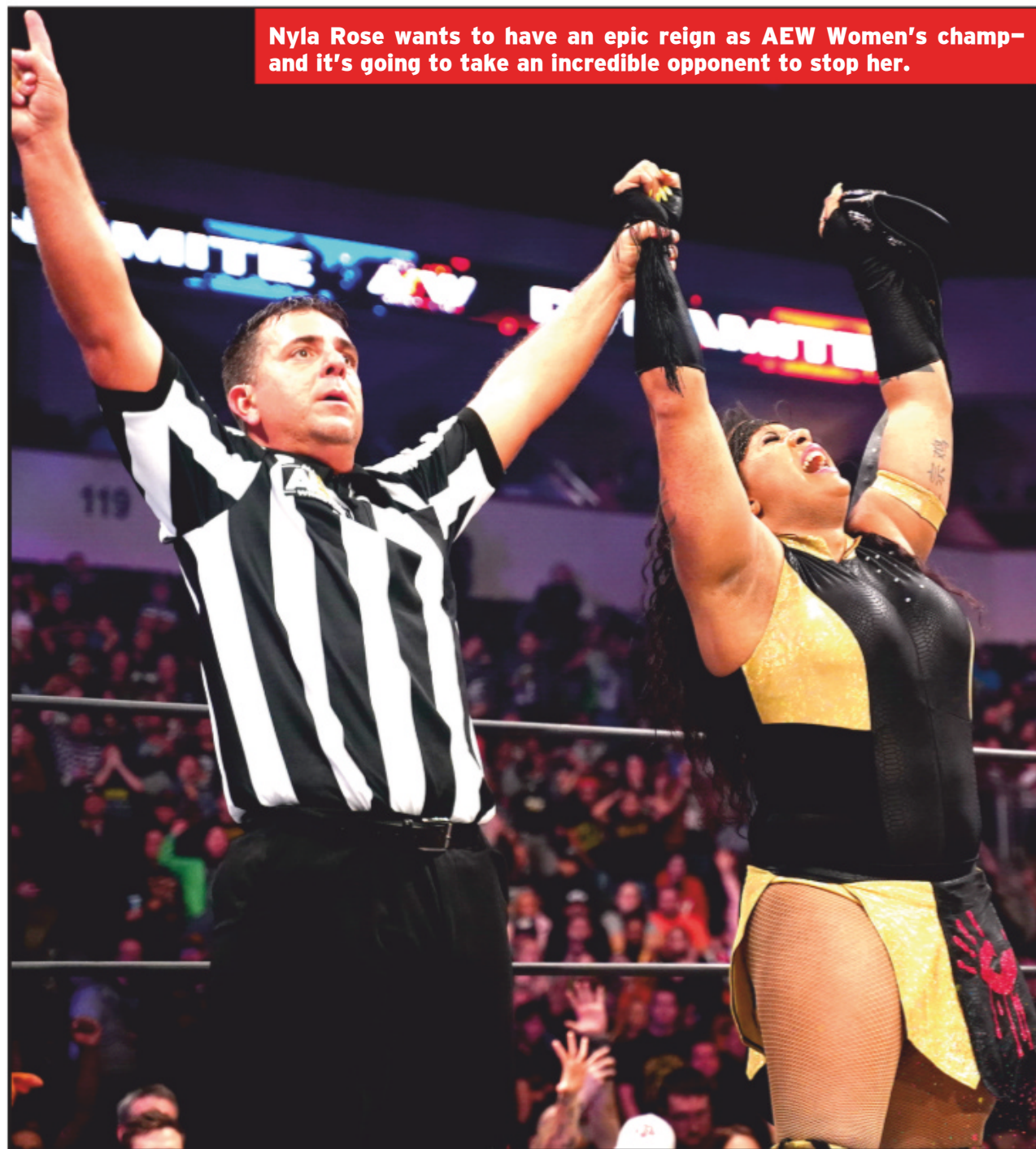


PHOTO BY LEE SOUTH/AEW



PHOTO BY HARRY AARON/MLW

A HERITAGE OF GREATNESS JACOB FATU DEFENDS THE SAMOAN BLOODLINE!

BEHOLD HIS POWER AND MARVEL AT HIS AGILITY. FEAR HIS BOUNDLESS AGGRESSION. OPPONENTS ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO STOP HIM. WHAT MOTIVATES THIS SAMOAN SUPERSTAR? THE WORD IS RESPECT.

TEXT BY HARRY BURKETT

"THE SAMOAN SMASHING machine" certainly looks like a member of the Anoa'i-Fatu wrestling family. Straight out of Northern California and wearing traditional Samoan ring attire, Jacob Fatu has flattened foes with Yokozuna's Banzai drop, stunned them with Rikishi's elevated sidekick, planted them with The Rock's Samoan drop, and cut them in half with Roman Reigns' spear.

Fatu has unsurpassed agility for a 6'2", 284-pounder, with a variety of moonsaults and dropkicks being part of his repertoire. In that respect, Fatu—who has reigned as Major League Wrestling heavyweight champion since last July—is reminiscent of the much smaller Tonga Kid, who also achieved success as part of The Islanders and The Samoan Swat Team ... and who happens to be his father.



Owing to his agility and raw strength, the 285-pound “Samoan Smashing Machine” is equally adept against MMA specialists like Tom Lawlor (above) and strikers like CIMA (below).

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MLW



“My dad really has had a big impact on how I take care of myself and how I handle myself backstage,” said Fatu. “He’s even inspired how I move in the ring. Watching footage of my dad in The Islanders the other day, I was tripping out on how high he was getting, how agile he was, and how he looked. Believe it or not, my father was the shortest brother out of everybody. I’m grateful to still have him around right now.”

Fatu must have been thinking about some of his rivals in MLW, including Brian Pillman Jr. and Davey Boy Smith Jr., whose fathers passed away far too soon. Even Marshall and Ross Von Erich, whose father, Kevin Von Erich, is very much alive and enjoying life in Hawaii, live in the shadow of loss. Kevin’s brothers—Jack, David, Kerry, Mike, and Chris—all died prematurely.

Fatu feels a connection to all of these second- and third-generation stars, which, in a strange way, intensifies his rivalries with them. Consider his title defense against Pillman Jr. in Dallas. Fatu dominated him for most of the match, but, frustrated that he couldn’t finish off the Cincinnati native, allowed his Contra Unit buddies to help him steal a victory.

In Fatu’s mind, he walked away under his own power with his championship intact. It was Pillman who limped backstage and needed the ice packs.

Now Fatu has a new target: Davey Boy Smith Jr.

“That name is definitely number one on my list,” noted Fatu. “My father wrestled his father at WrestleMania 4, The Islanders with Bobby ‘The Brain’ Heenan against his father, Davey Boy Smith, Dynamite Kid, and Koko B. Ware. There’s history there, and Davey Boy is one of the top competitors in MLW and around the world, and he’s a guy not to screw with backstage. Our background is different, but I feel I’m cut from the same cloth as him.”

Fatu’s admiration for Smith Jr. is obvious. That makes him different from

RANKING THE ANOA'I-FATU FAMILY

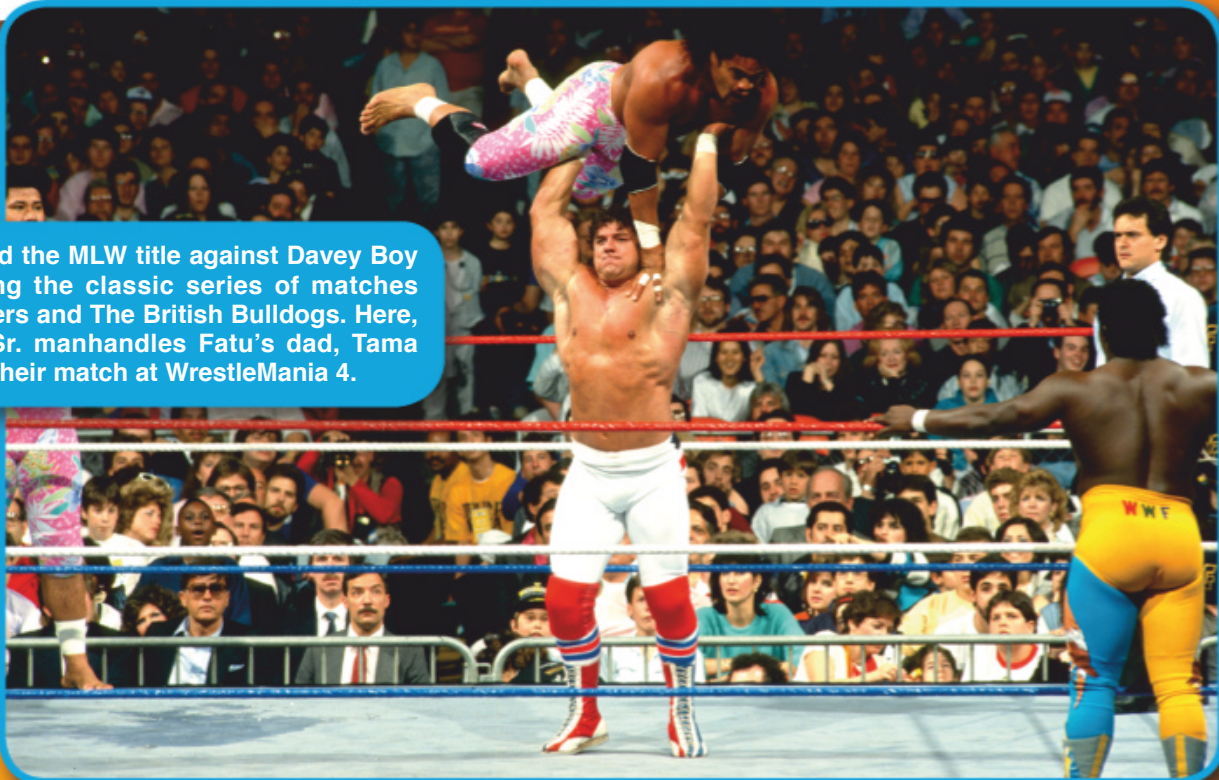
Many mighty clans have dominated pro wrestling: The Harts, the Von Erchs, the Guerreros, the Vachons, the Colons, the Rougeaus, the Funks, the Duseks, and the McMahons. But have any of these families boasted more than five or six stars, let alone 20? Here is our ranking of the members of the Anoa'i-Fatu dynasty.

FAMILY MEMBER	FAMILY LINK	TOP TITLE	THE SKINNY
1. The Rock	Rocky Johnson's son	WWE World	World's most electrifying entertainer
2. Roman Reigns	Sika's son	WWE World	"Big Dog" of WWE
3. Yokozuna	Afa & Sika's nephew	WWF World	Dominated the early-1990s
4. Peter Maivia	Afa & Sika's uncle	NWA Americas	Globe-traveling patriarch
5. Afa	Maivia's nephew	WWF tag	Tag team legend and trainer
6. Sika	Maivia's nephew	WWF tag	Original Wild Samoan
7. Rikishi	Afa & Sika's nephew	WWE I-C	Successful no matter his gimmick
8. Jimmy Uso	Rikishi's son	WWE tag	Shines on <i>Total Divas</i>
9. Jey Uso	Rikishi's son	WWE tag	Silent partner of The Usos
10. Umaga	Afa & Sika's nephew	WWE I-C	One of John Cena's greatest foes
11. Tonga Kid	Afa & Sika's nephew	WWC tag	Matilda stayed at his house
12. Nia Jax	The Rock's 3rd cousin	Raw Women's	Meanest Samoan drop ever
13. Samu	Afa's son	WWF tag	Third member of the Wild Samoans
14. Rosey	Sika's son	WWE tag	Got over in three minutes
15. Jacob Fatu	Tonga Kid's son	MLW heavy	Cornerstone of Contra Unit
16. L.A. Smooth	Afa's son	WWC tag	Best known in WXW and ECW
17. Afa Jr.	Afa's son	WWC tag	Manu of WWE's The Legacy
18. Lance Anoa'i	Samu's son	WXW heavy	Shane beat him down on <i>Raw</i>
19. Black Pearl	Afa & Sika's nephew	NEW heavy	Looks like a movie star
10. Simone Johnson	The Rock's daughter	None	Destined for greatness?

THE IN-LAWS

1. Rocky Johnson	Maivia's son-in-law	WWF tag	"Soulman" was a pioneer
2. Gary Albright	Afa's son-in-law	All Japan tag	Technically skilled grappler
3. Naomi	Rikishi's daughter-in-law	SD Women's	Jimmy Uso feels the glow

Fatu wants to defend the MLW title against Davey Boy Smith Jr., advancing the classic series of matches between The Islanders and The British Bulldogs. Here, Davey Boy Smith Sr. manhandles Fatu's dad, Tama (The Tonga Kid), in their match at WrestleMania 4.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF MLW

Fatu considers his Contra Unit allies, including Josef Samael, to be “blood brothers.” There’s never any question about whether they have his back.

most heels in the business. Fatu has profound respect for his opponents (even challengers like CIMA, whom he put in a body bag). He studies video constantly, and that’s why he has been such an effective champion against MLW’s fusion of styles—taking down high-flyers, MMA specialists, and strikers alike.

Another reason Fatu is so dominant is because he is a member of Contra Unit, MLW’s top faction. Josef Samael, a formidable wrestler in his own right, is the inspirational leader of the group, with Fatu, Simon Gotch, and Ikuro Kwon (currently on the disabled list) doing his bidding. Fatu’s recent multi-year contract extension ensures Contra Unit will be raising its black flag for some time to come.

The only group in MLW that rivals Contra Unit’s influence is The Dynasty, currently comprised of Alexander Hammerstone, Richard Holliday, and Gino Medina. The two factions try to stay out of each other’s way, but their use of the “Dynasty” name certainly got Fatu’s attention.

“We sat down and spoke about it, to take care of business. We’re grown men ... At the



Fatu insists he means no disrespect to opponents like CIMA (seen here in a body bag). He simply wants to prove his dominance.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MLW

end of the day, I'm respectful of The Dynasty. They know what's going on with us and we know what's going on with them."

Fatu was taught respect from the beginning. "I was trained by people close to me, like Gangrel, my father Sam Fatu, my uncle Rikishi, and my uncle Black Pearl out of Hawaii," he said. "During my first two weeks of training, they really broke me down and built me back up." They didn't take it easy on their student. If anything, they made things as tough as possible.

Backstage at WrestleMania 31, Afa and Sika Anoa'i Fli told young Jacob how his father, Sam, broke into the business. According to the original Wild Samoans, Vince McMahon asked them if their underage nephew could serve as a last-minute replacement for a worker who failed to appear. Afa and Sika asked Sam to meet them backstage, where they shut the door and took turns slapping the youngster about the face and ears.

Their message was clear: Vince McMahon is giving you an opportunity. Take it seriously and don't screw it up.

Sam Fatu listened and learned, and did his job that night. McMahon hired him when he turned 18 several weeks later. Within a couple of months, Sam—as The

Tonga Kid—had essentially replaced Jimmy Snuka in the WWF and was feuding with Roddy Piper in New York's Madison Square Garden.

Jacob Fatu heeded that lesson. He is passionate about commanding respect in the wrestling business.

"I represent Contra Unit, and I represent the Samoan dynasty," said Fatu. "And, you know what, I represent Northern California, the Bay Area. It all started here with my uncle Rikishi, Umaga, The Wild Samoans Afa and Sika, and everybody knows The Rock was born out here in Hayward. I came from a rough neighborhood, Lincoln Village, in North Cali. I represent a lot of independent workers, and I'm one of the very few to make it out of my neighborhood and be successful. I'm representing my friends who are not here anymore and a lot of my friends who are still stuck out there living that life ..."

Fatu nearly breaks off as he considers all the responsibility he feels. "Most of all, I think of my own family: my beautiful wife, Elizabeth Fatu, and our six children. I do it for all of them."

No wonder the MLW champion continues to dominate and impress. With all the motivation that drives Jacob Fatu, who can stop him? □



The MLW heavyweight champ takes the Anoa'i-Fatu wrestling legacy incredibly seriously—and he'll defend it at all costs.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MLW

THE VILLAIN, MY VILLAIN

TEXT BY MIKE BESSLER

WRESTLING'S PLAGUE
DOCTOR PLOTS TO TAKE
RING OF HONOR TO THE
NEXT LEVEL



"THE VILLAIN" MARTY SCURLL WOULD BE A HUGE ASSET TO ANY PROMOTION, BUT HE CHOSE RING OF HONOR OVER THE REST. NOW WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES AS WELL AS IN THE RING, HE HAS BIG PLANS FOR THE COMPANY'S FUTURE.



PHOTO BY ZIA HILTEY/RING OF HONOR

IN THESE UNCERTAIN times, the world needs a villain like Marty Scurll. As the planet shudders in the grip of pestilence and fear, Scurll strides confidently through the misery and ruin. He is a veritable walking nightmare, wearing the mask of a Renaissance-era plague doctor and engineering new schemes for conquest as the world around him burns. Scurll's penchant for cold, calculating, and decisive action casts him as a decidedly Machiavellian figure—a consummate antihero who garners the respect of his adversaries and the fervent affection of his admirers.

Ring of Honor has put a lot of faith in Scurll. In January, it handed over booking duties to the 31-year-old grappler. Already an internationally renowned headliner with a rabid fan following, Scurll would have been an incredible get for any major wrestling promotion, but particularly for red-hot AEW, which courted “The Villain” for its own rogues’ gallery.

“Obviously I considered it,” Scurll said regarding the prospect of jumping to AEW.

But, ultimately, Scurll re-upped his contract with ROH, looking to make an impact not only as a wrestler, but also as a creative force.

“Ring of Honor came to me about it,” Scurll said of his new role behind the scenes. “They realized it was time to make a big change and to have fresh

ideas. I feel like I have always had a good connection with the fans and knew what they wanted to see. They knew how creative I was and my passion for pro wrestling.”

To be sure, Scurll's stint as matchmaker hit an unfortunate, yet unavoidable, hiccup with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Just two months into his tenure as booker, ROH was forced to postpone all shows until at least June—bringing Scurll's grand designs to a screeching halt. But early results were encouraging, from his top-to-bottom involvement in the company's February “Free Enterprise” event (a stacked card that cost zero dollars to attend) to the planned revivals of the ROH Pure and Women's championships.

It's taken Scurll 16 years to reach the top of the heap in one of the most celebrated wrestling promotions of the present era. After learning the ropes at the Dropkixx Academy in Essex, England, with ring vet Tony Scarlo, Scurll set out to make a name for himself in a burgeoning British wrestling scene.

Scurll's determination and work ethic found an ideal proving grounds in IPW: UK, where he grappled with other British standouts like Will Ospreay and Zack Sabre Jr. In 2012, Scurll's stock rose even further when he joined talent-rich Progress Wrestling, later becoming an integral part of that company's roster, as well as its first two-time champion.

With his dark clothing and signature plague doctor mask, Marty Scurll cuts a figure of the quintessential wrestling villain.

PHOTO BY ROBERT BELLAMY/RING OF HONOR





PHOTO BY BRUNO SILVEIRA/RING OF HONOR

Though a sound technician, Scurll isn't above taking the occasional shortcut (like this low blow, delivered to Jay Lethal). Certain fans love him all the more for this.

During his time with Progress, Scurll took one of his biggest leaps forward, reinventing himself as “The Villain.” Adorned in steampunk couture—including his signature beaked mask, top hat, and weaponized umbrella—Scurll distinguished himself as a new kind of rogue, bent on sowing chaos and making war against the top echelons of pro wrestling in England.

As “The Villain,” Scurll developed a reputation for opportunism and skullduggery, his exploits resonating with European fans, as well as newfound legions in American promotions, including Pro Wrestling Guerrilla, EVOLVE, and Dragon Gate USA. In 2016, he signed with ROH for the first time, quickly earning his first title gold by defeating Ospreay for the TV championship.

ROH fans received a crash course in Scurll's prowess in the months that followed, as he successfully defended the belt against a veritable who's who of fan favorites. In 2017, Scurll cemented his status as one of ROH's most formidable forces when he attacked Adam Cole and aligned himself with the notorious Bullet Club during the unforgettable dénouement of the ROH/NJPW crossover event, War of the Worlds.

“It put new eyes on me,” Scurll said of that pivotal moment. “Even the casual fans and WWE fans had heard of Bullet Club.”

As he climbed the ranks as a performer, it was “The Villain's” fundamental understanding of ring psychology, character building, and the creative process that made him stand out.

“I've always been very business savvy. As much as I love pro wrestling, I have always understood that it is a business,” Scurll said. “I have been very picky about the stuff I do and what I put out there, and I make sure I make the best decisions.”

Indeed, his persona has achieved the coveted status of “marketable,” breaking records through merchandise

In his role as booker, “The Villain” is careful not to let egos interfere. Scurll may appear to have Bandido's number in this photo, but he's also lost to him on numerous occasions.

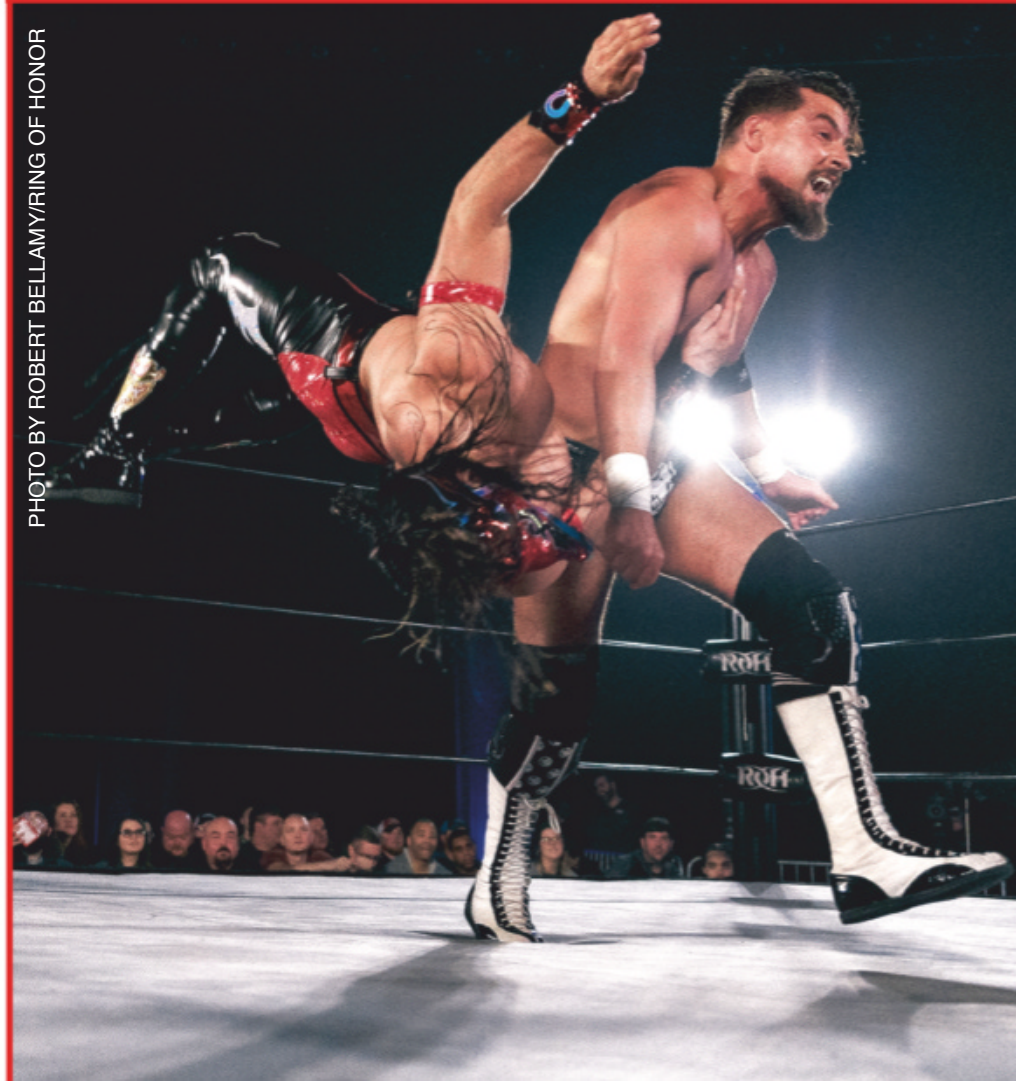


PHOTO BY ROBERT BELLAMY/RING OF HONOR

sellers like Pro Wrestling Tees and Hot Topic. And Scurll has always had a keen sense of what's best for him and his career.

As speculation ran wild that he would sign with AEW when his ROH contract expired in 2020, Scurll considered a number of personal and professional factors—including his relationship with Matt and Nick Jackson, who serve as executive vice presidents of All Elite Wrestling.

"Matt and Nick are two of my best friends," he said. "I talk to them pretty much daily."

Scurll weighed the attractive proposition of working alongside his mates against the potential of propelling ROH—and his own brand—to new heights. Holding true to his instincts, he chose the latter path.

"I had an opportunity to stay with Ring of Honor, make them a competitor, and really push them on all fronts," he said. "I could have gone to AEW, but would I have been just another wrestler?"

Although Scurll remains a top-tier performer on the ROH roster, he is adamant that he always places business interests above self-promotion and the egos of his peers.

"There's always going to be disagreements," he admitted. "Every wrestler wants what's best for himself,



PHOTO BY ZIA HILTEY/RING OF HONOR

Scurll wants to create lasting partnerships between ROH and other major promotions. Here, he tangles with NWA champion Nick Aldis.

but you can't keep everyone on top. You have to do what's best for the company."

Scurll clearly adores his role as booker, relishing the opportunity to develop new talent, and is optimistic about the possibility of future collaborations with organizations like NWA, New Japan, and even AEW.

"For years, Ring of Honor's tagline has been 'The Best Wrestling On The Planet,'" he said. "My aim is to get us to the point that we're living up to that, show in and show out."

Even as the COVID-19 crisis put a temporary halt to his big plans, Marty Scurll remained determined to create the best wrestling product possible.

"The fans are excited to see something different," he said. "They still will. They will just have to wait a bit longer than expected." □



While he may be a "villain" in the ring, Scurll is happy to oblige this young ROH fan with an autograph.

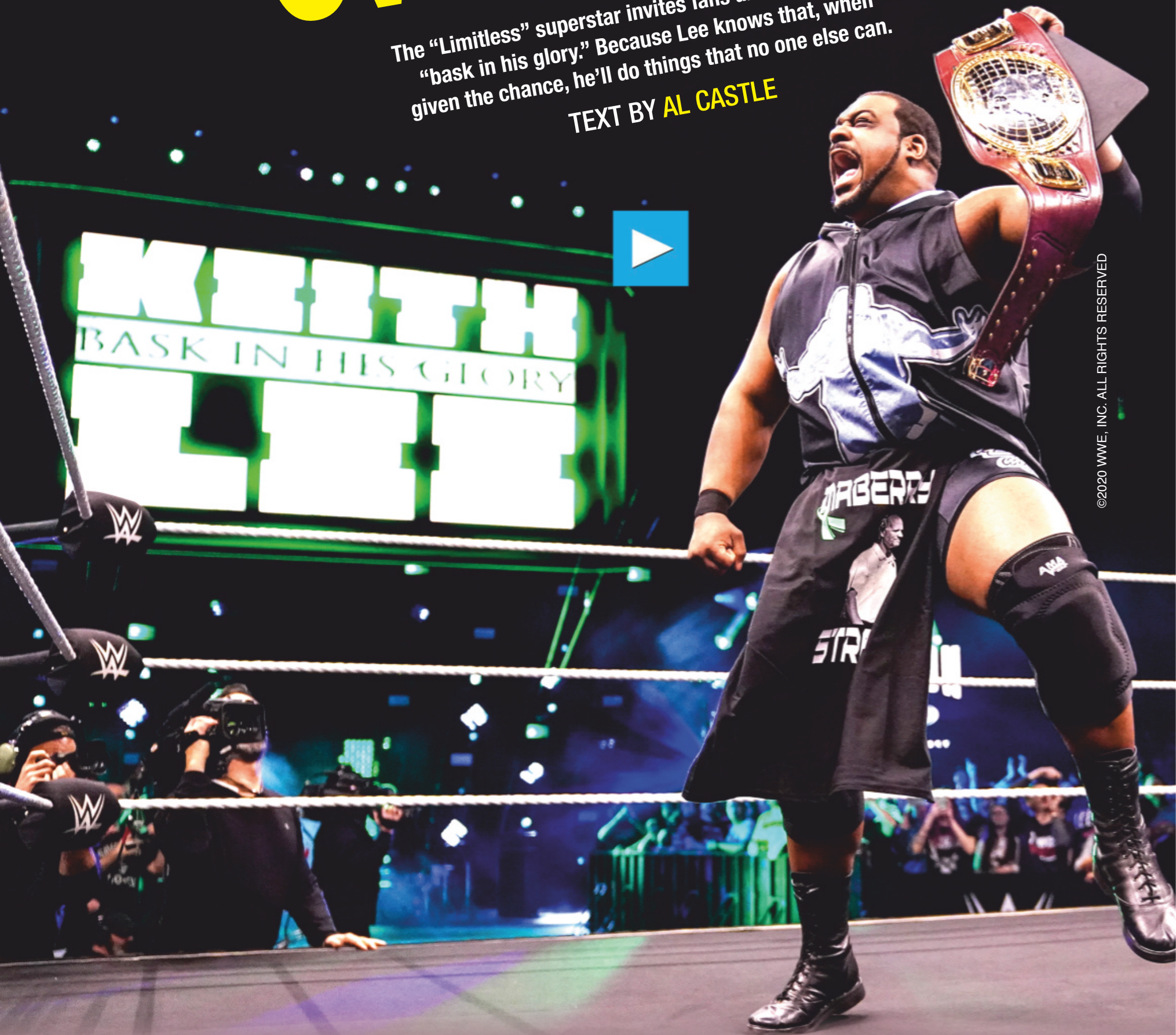
PHOTO BY ANDREA KELLAWAY/RING OF HONOR

MAIN-EVENTER IN WAITING

KEITH LEE WILL NEVER BE PASSED OVER AGAIN!

The “Limitless” superstar invites fans and opponents to “bask in his glory.” Because Lee knows that, when given the chance, he’ll do things that no one else can.

TEXT BY **AL CASTLE**



ON WHAT SHOULD have been one of the biggest weeks of his career, Keith Lee passed his days watching Japanese anime videos and building a computer.

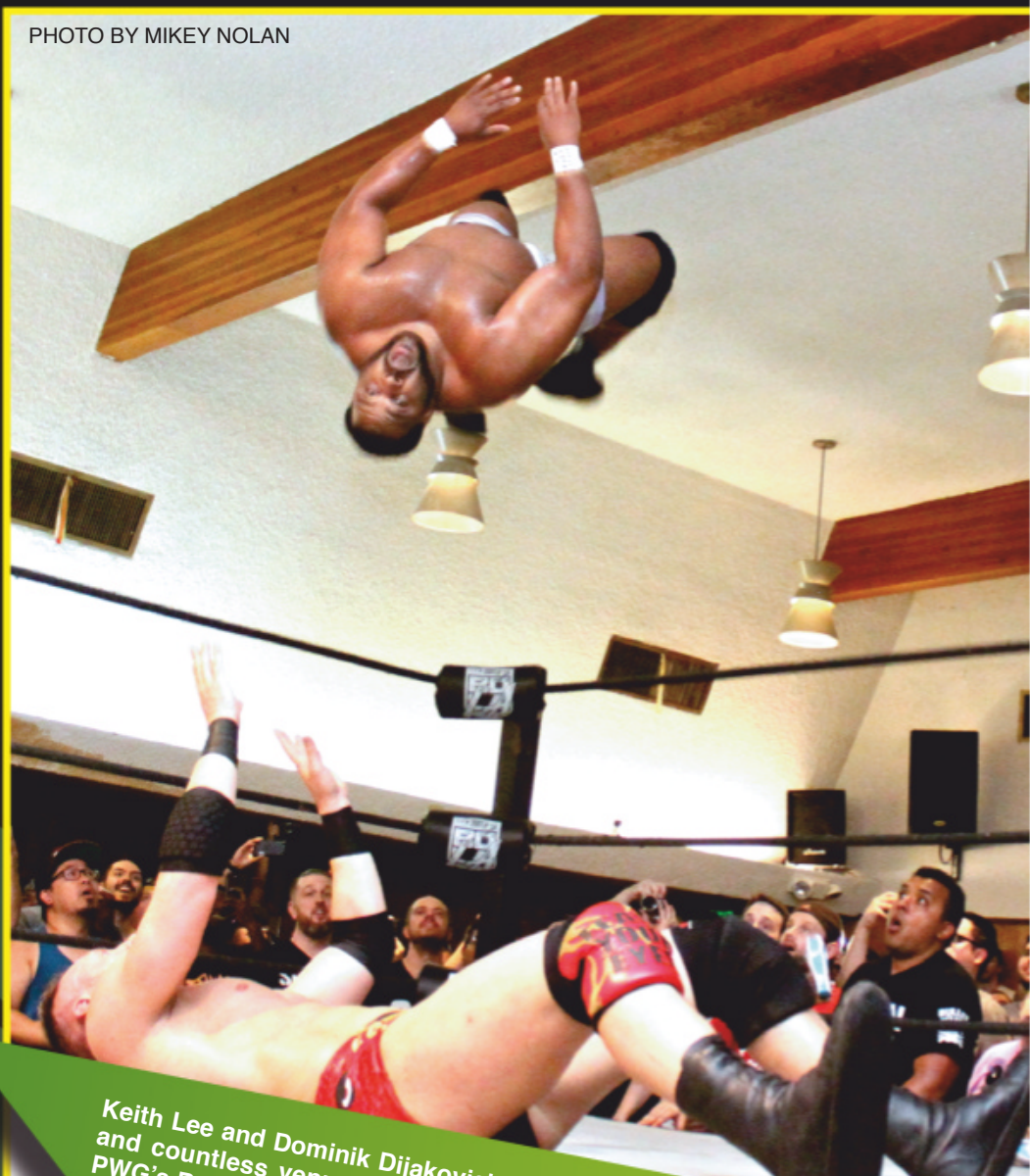
“That’s almost done, though, so I’m going to test that baby out pretty soon,” said Lee, who, like millions of Americans, found himself largely confined to his home in March, as the coronavirus pandemic swept through the nation.

Lee expected to be spending this time gearing up for a high-profile defense of his NXT North American championship in front of a jam-packed Amalie Arena in Tampa as part of WrestleMania 36 weekend. Instead, the planned TakeOver event was replaced with a TV taping in a small venue ... with no fans in attendance.

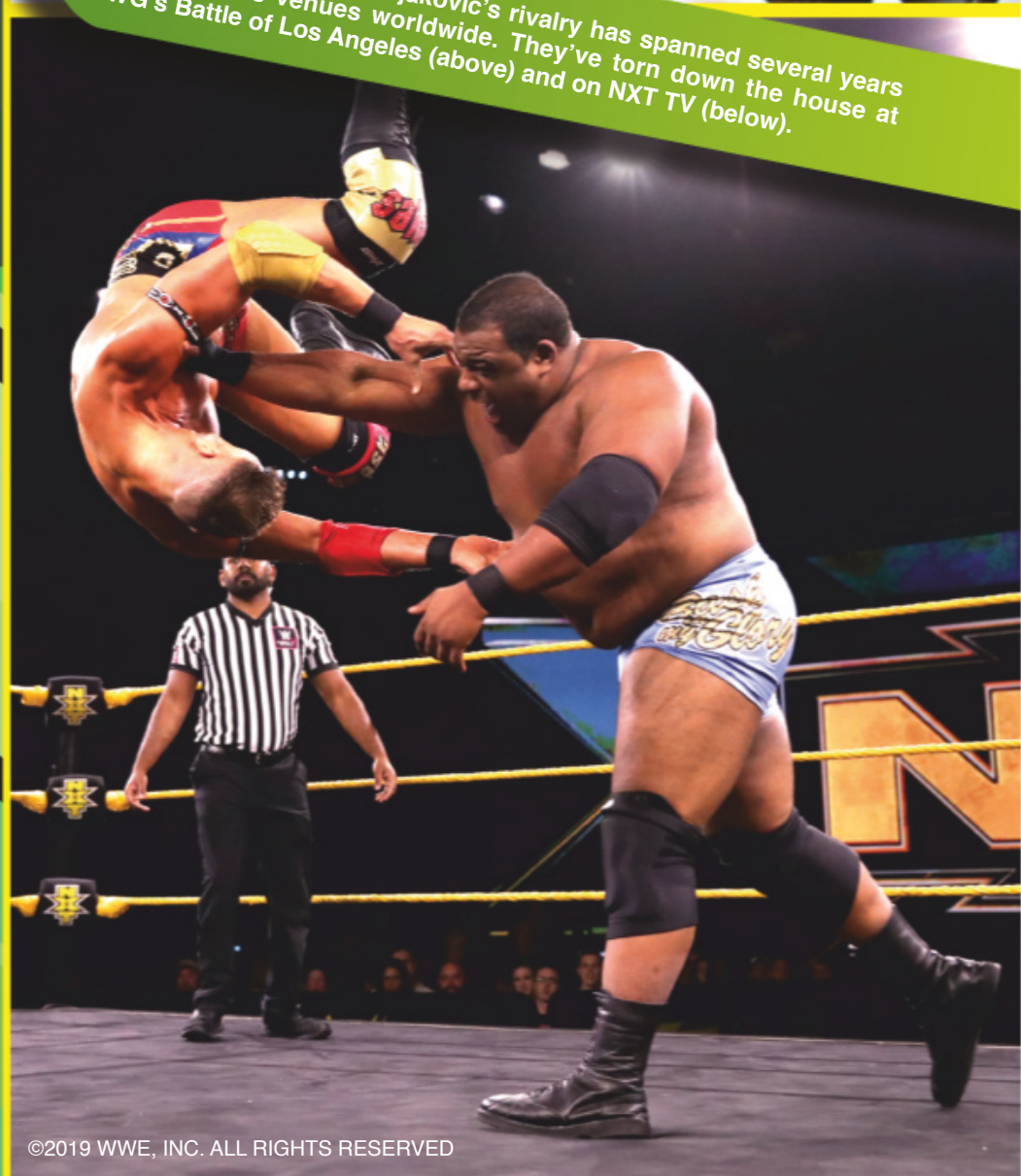
But while the COVID-19 outbreak may have derailed his plans—and those of much of the world’s population—Lee refused to let it derail his momentum.

“It is unfortunate,” Lee said. “At the end of the day, I’m not concerned about it, because I feel like, regardless of that scenario, given the opportunity, I’m still going to go out and do battle. I’m going to do my best to provide some form of entertainment for the people. And I want to go and give my best. That’s all I can do.”

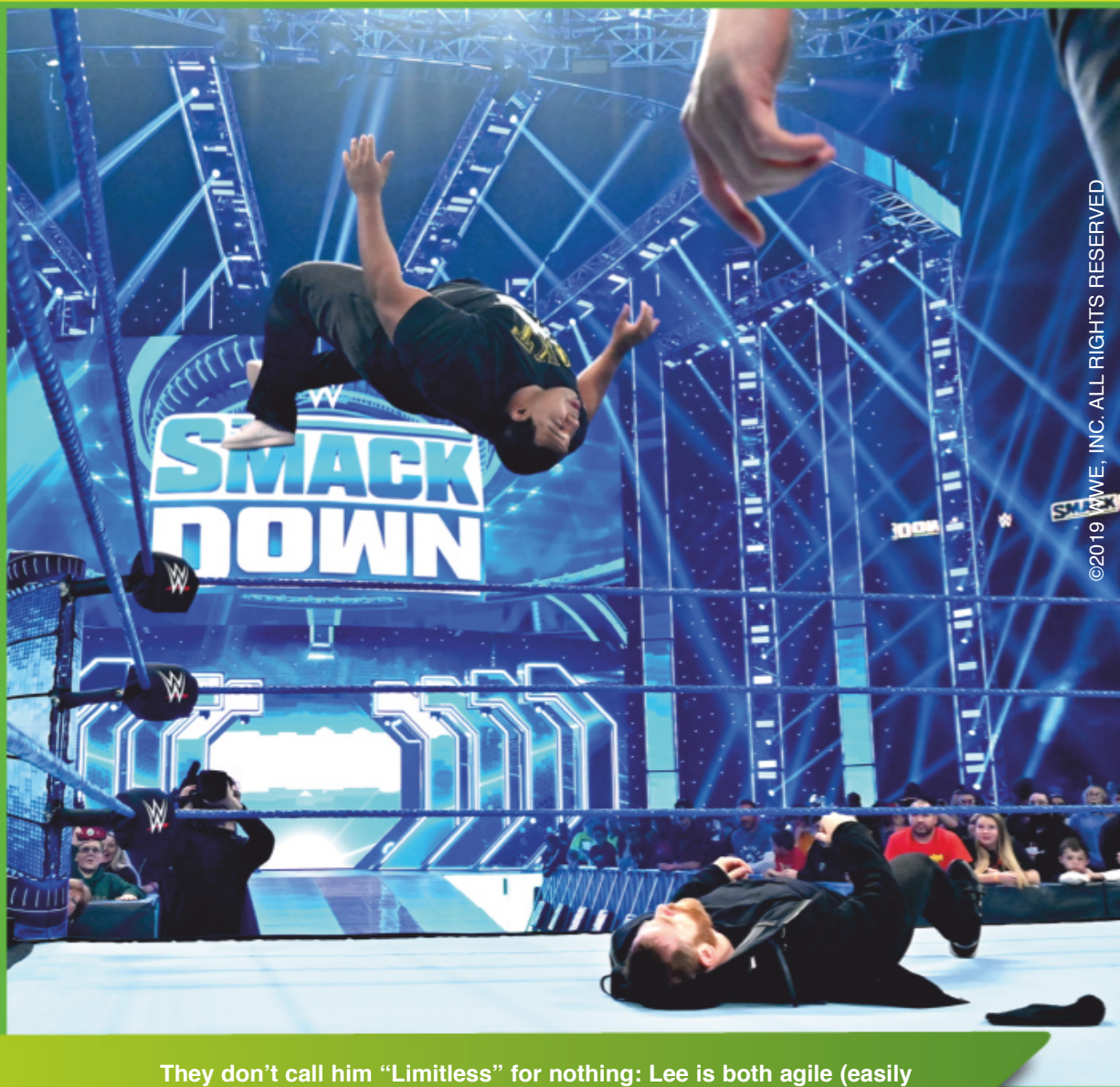
PHOTO BY MIKEY NOLAN



Keith Lee and Dominik Dijakovic's rivalry has spanned several years and countless venues worldwide. They've torn down the house at PWG's Battle of Los Angeles (above) and on NXT TV (below).



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They don't call him "Limitless" for nothing: Lee is both agile (easily matching Sami Zayn, above) and incredibly strong (as Seth Rollins quickly learned, below).



The "Limitless" superstar's signature brand of confidence and optimism has carried him through difficult times before. The Wichita Falls, Texas, native grinded it out on the independent scene for more than a decade, with only modest success—until a video of a May 2016 match for Beyond Wrestling in Providence, Rhode Island, went viral.

Lee's opponent that night was someone with whom his career would be inextricably linked right through the present day: Donovan Dijak. For the next several years,

the two would take their magic show on the road, along the way earning a five-star rating from Dave Meltzer for one clash at Pro Wrestling Guerrilla's 2017 Battle of Los Angeles tournament.

"He is a guy that brings a certain level of competition out of you. And for me specifically, it helps so much to have someone that can stand toe to toe with me, and really push me to another level," Lee said of Dijak, who is now known to NXT fans as Dominik Dijakovic. "I never had considered that this would be a match that people wanted to see around the world, which has been the case, from Europe to all over the United States. It's been pretty awesome."

But despite the buzz Lee was creating throughout the independents, including as EVOLVE's WWN champion, he still struggled to get WWE shot-callers to "bask in his glory." After passing on Lee in two previous tryouts, WWE finally signed him in April 2018. Lee said the timing couldn't have been better, even though he was already entering his mid-30s.

"I do think that being passed over allowed me to mature in a business sense and view things with a different perspective," Lee said. "The growth I had while being passed over and moving on to different things, trying new things, experiencing new things, allowed me to essentially start from the very bottom ... and grow into something completely different before going there."

Even once he arrived in the big leagues, Lee still struggled to get noticed. While he watched other former indie stars quickly climb through the ranks in NXT—wrestling in championship matches and at TakeOver events—Lee admits he spent most of his first year-plus "on the bench."

When an opportunity finally presented itself, Lee made the most of it, like he had done so many times before. That opportunity came in the Fall of 2019, when NXT invaded WWE's main roster leading up to Survivor Series. The tentpole WWE pay-per-view event would feature competitors from all three brands competing for supremacy. And Lee was chosen to be part of NXT's five-man team in one of the card's main-event matches.

Lee was widely viewed as the MVP of the 15-man, tri-branded elimination bout. He pinned multiple-time World champion Seth Rollins and made it to the very end of the 30-minute bout, before being eliminated by sole survivor Roman Reigns. It was the breakout performance Lee had been working toward his whole career.



Keith Lee celebrates with the NXT North American title belt after winning it from Roderick Strong on January 22.

Catastrophe finisher—a fireman’s carry-jackhammer combination.

“Keith Lee, as an individual, stands outside of the box of usual judgment,” said Lee, who acknowledged that his physique is unlike what many fans are used to seeing in their top WWE stars. “In every form of the word, I’m different. In terms of athleticism, I’m different. In terms of power, I’m different. I’m different in terms of explosiveness. I am a different human being. And that makes me unique.”

“It’s such a weird thing to look back on. To go from [not being used on TV] to now I’m the last guy in the ring at Survivor Series,” Lee said. “That’s the magic.”

Lee’s newfound momentum continued through January, when he defeated Roderick Strong for the NXT North American championship. Four days later, he entered the 2020 Royal Rumble match and held his own against Brock Lesnar—even knocking the WWE World heavyweight champion off his feet—before being tossed out of the ring while grappling with Braun Strowman near the ropes.

“If you are an individual who is sharing the ring with, arguably, the most dangerous man in WWE, and you go toe-to-toe and put him on his ass, you’re doing pretty well for yourself,” said Lee, who hopes to someday reunite with Lesnar in the ring under different circumstances. “I don’t care what anyone says. That, to me, is big-time energy. That sowed the seeds for something that could be extremely special down the line. Because, I guarantee you, Brock Lesnar has never faced anything like a Keith Lee in his career.”

Indeed, at 6’2”, weighing 320 pounds, and possessing the agility of a cruiserweight, Lee combines the power of Strowman with the agility of AJ Styles into a unique hybrid of skills that has rarely been seen in WWE. That’s evident from his Big Bang

different human being. And that makes me unique.”

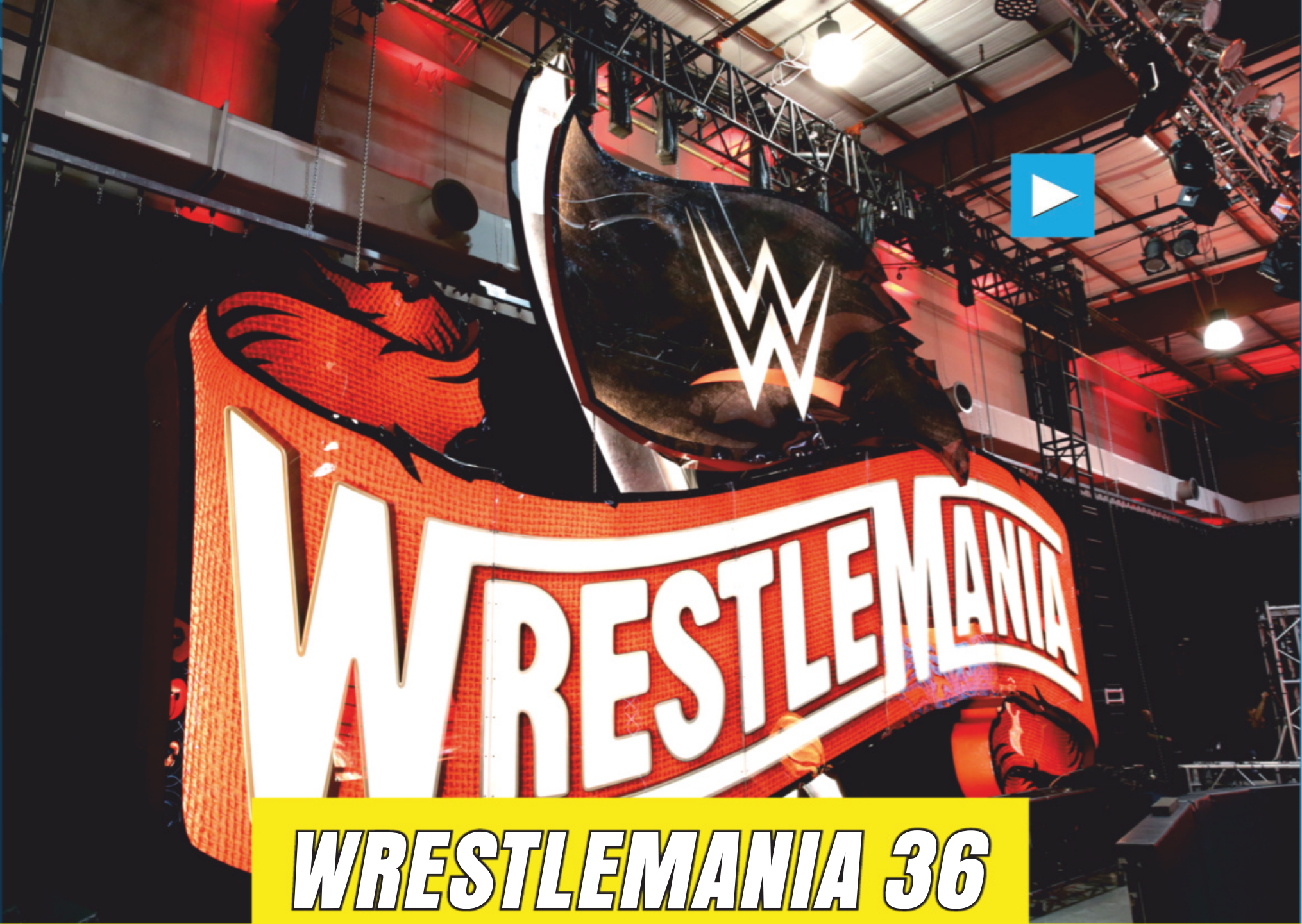
Lee said he looks forward to showing off what makes him unique to the entire world, once it gets back to normal. And, in a year, Lee expects his WrestleMania week will be a lot more eventful than this one—perhaps with a match on the big event itself.

“If you ask me, I could have been on this one,” Lee said. “All I can do is continue to grind ... and continue working hard. And perhaps an opportunity will come. And, perhaps, I’ll get a chance to knock that one out of the park. Only time can tell. Because, you know, as they say in wrestling, ‘Card is subject to change,’ my man.” □

Lee had a brief, though memorable, showdown with Brock Lesnar in the 2020 Royal Rumble match. He looks forward to tangling with “The Beast” again in the future.

PHOTO BY GEORGE NAPOLITANO





WRESTLEMANIA 36

THE *REAL* WINNERS & LOSERS

TEXT BY BRIAN SOLOMON

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THERE HAVE BEEN many historic firsts at WrestleMania, but there has never been an event quite like this one.

For one thing, the COVID-19 crisis forced WWE to put on its banner pay-per-view with no audience present. This was also the first WrestleMania taped in advance, as well as the first one presented over two nights.

Despite less than optimal circumstances, this year's 'Mania gave fans many unforgettable

moments—including a disturbing Boneyard Match that seemed more like a horror movie than a wrestling bout, a bizarre Firefly Fun House match that stretched the very definition of what wrestling can be, and the coronation of two new World champions.

Apart from the Firefly Fun House Match, it was pretty clear who won all of this year's contests ... on paper, anyway. But, over the next 19 pages, as is our annual tradition, we'll reveal the *real* winners and losers of WrestleMania 36.

CESARO vs. DREW GULAK

This opener was a test of strength and technique right from the start, with both competitors showing off their submission prowess. Although they spent some time brawling outside the ring, most of the bout took place on the mat, with Gulak targeting Cesaro's arm and "The Swiss Cyborg" using European uppercuts and stiff boots to maintain the upper hand. Pulling out a rare maneuver from wrestling's past, Cesaro trapped Gulak in an airplane spin (with no hands!), dropped him to the mat, and became WrestleMania 36's first victor.

THE WINNER

Cesaro by pinfall in 4:22

THE REAL WINNERS

Those who tuned into the WrestleMania Kick-Off show. Sometimes, fans skip over this largely hype-filled hour, waiting for the start of the main pay-per-view. Those who began their viewing early were treated to a short, but exciting clinic between two grappling masters.

THE REAL LOSER

Sheamus. The tough Irishman returned to action as a singles competitor after years of successful teaming with Cesaro. But Sheamus' career has since stalled, indicating maybe it was unwise to part with his tag partner. Thanks to this strong win, Cesaro has little reason to consider reforming The Bar with his former associate.



Drew Gulak had a lot of momentum heading into WrestleMania, but he was no match for "The Swiss Cyborg" Cesaro.



Alexa Bliss rears back to level Kairi Sane with a vicious slap. Bliss would later pin Sane to claim the Women's tag title for herself and partner Nikki Cross.

THE KABUKI WARRIORS vs. ALEXA BLISS & NIKKI CROSS

Kairi Sane and Asuka entered as Women's tag team champions, but, by the end of the proceedings, their six-month reign would come to a crashing end. It wasn't for lack of trying, as The Kabuki Warriors did their best to cut off the ring—isolating Bliss as a desperate Cross tried to rally her teammate. Once Cross finally tagged in, she lit into the opposition, nailing a spinning neckbreaker on Sane and quickly tagging in her partner, who hit Twisted Bliss ... leading to the championship win.

THE WINNER

Alexa Bliss and Nikki Cross by pinfall in 15:00

THE REAL WINNER

Nikki Cross. We knew Bliss was an impressive and accomplished competitor. But, prior to her association with "Lil' Miss Bliss," Cross was something of an also-ran in the division. Now that's changed, and she finds herself among the cream of the crop.

THE REAL LOSER

Asuka. Once the undefeated "Empress Of Tomorrow," this formerly dominant NXT Women's champ has fallen far. Her comedy antics were at least forgivable while she was champion. But, without that tag gold, she is now a shell of her former self.

ELIAS vs. KING CORBIN

Elias clobbered Corbin before the bell, delaying the start of the match. Once the bell rang, the King came to life, laying into Elias with clubbing blows that weakened his opponent's shoulder. Overcoming the pain, the musical grappler fought back. A series of near-falls ensued, with both men coming close to victory. A frustrated Corbin tried a pin with his feet on the ropes, but he was caught. This gave Elias the opportunity to roll up WWE's monarch with a handful of tights for the win.

THE WINNERS

Elias by pinfall in 8:53

THE REAL WINNER

Elias. The guitar-strumming competitor had yet to be taken seriously on the WrestleMania stage. No longer a comedy diversion between matches, Elias was given a chance to show what he can do under the brightest of spotlights.

THE REAL LOSER

The King of the Ring title. Gone are the days of tournament winners like Bret Hart, Steve Austin, Kurt Angle, and Brock Lesnar, who used WWE's crown as a springboard to greatness. Corbin has tarnished the prestige of King of the Ring, and this humiliating defeat is proof positive.



Seizing a handful of tights, Elias steals a big victory from King Corbin.



Mojo Rawley and Rob Gronkowski eyeball 24/7 champ R-Truth, moments before Rawley pinned him to win the title.

MOJO RAWLEY vs. R-TRUTH

The ubiquitous 24/7 championship match is always the wild card of any WWE event, and WrestleMania 36 was no different. On this, the first night of action, champion R-Truth happened to crash the proceedings while Rob Gronkowski, the host of the show, was chatting on camera with longtime friend Mojo Rawley. Seeking to seize the moment and make a bid for his first taste of WWE gold, "Gronk" pounced on Truth. But Rawley broke up the count, covered R-Truth himself, and secured his seventh 24/7 title.

THE WINNER

Mojo Rawley by pinfall in 0:09

THE REAL WINNER

R-Truth. This may seem counterintuitive, since the 35-time 24/7 champ lost the match. But, as always, Truth proved incredibly entertaining, with his reference to himself as the "24/7, 48/7, 7-11, 365, I-95 North, South, European, Television champion."

THE REAL LOSER

Rob Gronkowski. Not only did the former New England Patriots tight end not have very much to do as host of WrestleMania 36, but he also failed in this first impromptu attempt to snag title gold, being upstaged by his supposed "friend," Rawley.

BECKY LYNCH vs. SHAYNA BASZLER

“The Man” arrived at the Performance Center in her custom 18-wheeler, ready to pay Baszler back for weeks of intimidation tactics. Their battle for the Raw Women’s championship turned into a contest of submission strategies, as Baszler repeatedly went for her Kirifuda Clutch and Lynch looked for the perfect opening for the Dis-arm-her. After a brawl on the outside, Baszler tossed Lynch back into the ring and locked her in the Kirifuda, only to have Lynch reverse the leverage, and pin Baszler’s shoulders to the mat while still trapped in the hold ... retaining her title in the process.



When all was said and done, Lynch was left standing tall against arguably her toughest challenger to date.



In the eyes of many, Shayna Baszler was the favorite in her match with Becky Lynch. Her strength and submission prowess are too much for most opponents to withstand.



THE WINNER

Becky Lynch by pinfall in 8:33

THE REAL WINNER

Ronda Rousey. With the whole wrestling world wondering if and when the former UFC powerhouse would make her return to WWE, it would seem that the timing is more perfect than ever. Her old rival Becky Lynch is stronger and more dominant than even a year ago, and Rousey would surely enjoy nothing more than to finally knock her off her perch.

THE REAL LOSER

NXT. Shayna Baszler was the best of the best, as far as the black-and-gold brand was concerned: an unstoppable force of nature running through every woman thrown at her like a buzz saw since she first debuted in 2017. The surprisingly quick manner in which Lynch dispatched her may have set back NXT’s aspirations to be seen as more than just a “developmental territory.”

SAMI ZAYN vs. DANIEL BRYAN

In a shameless display, Intercontinental champ Sami Zayn spent the early minutes of the match desperately trying to get away from his challenger—repeatedly leaving the ring before Bryan finally got his hands on him. It wasn't pretty after that, with Bryan bringing the fight to Zayn in a big way: raining down punches, kicks, and stomps on the prone champion. Zayn's cronies, Cesaro and Shinsuke Nakamura, tried to even the playing field, only to be neutralized by Bryan's associate, Drew Gulak. Nevertheless, "The Artist Collective" did manage to make a difference, distracting Bryan just enough for Zayn to catch him with a swift kick. With that, Zayn scored the pin and scampered off with his precious title belt in hand.

THE WINNER

Sami Zayn by pinfall in 9:16

THE REAL WINNER

Daniel Bryan. Although the leader of the "Yes" movement suffered a defeat, most would agree it was a fluke loss. It was obvious to viewers that Bryan actually dominated most of the match, dishing out a hellacious beating to the obnoxious Zayn before the champ landed a lucky shot and stole the win.

THE REAL LOSER

Sami Zayn. Yes, Zayn did indeed walk away with the gold. But he was thoroughly humiliated by Bryan throughout the match, begging for mercy as the challenger pounded him into the mat and chased him around the ringside area. Zayn was exposed for what he is: a blatant coward.



Daniel Bryan threw everything he had—in this case, his entire body—at Sami Zayn.

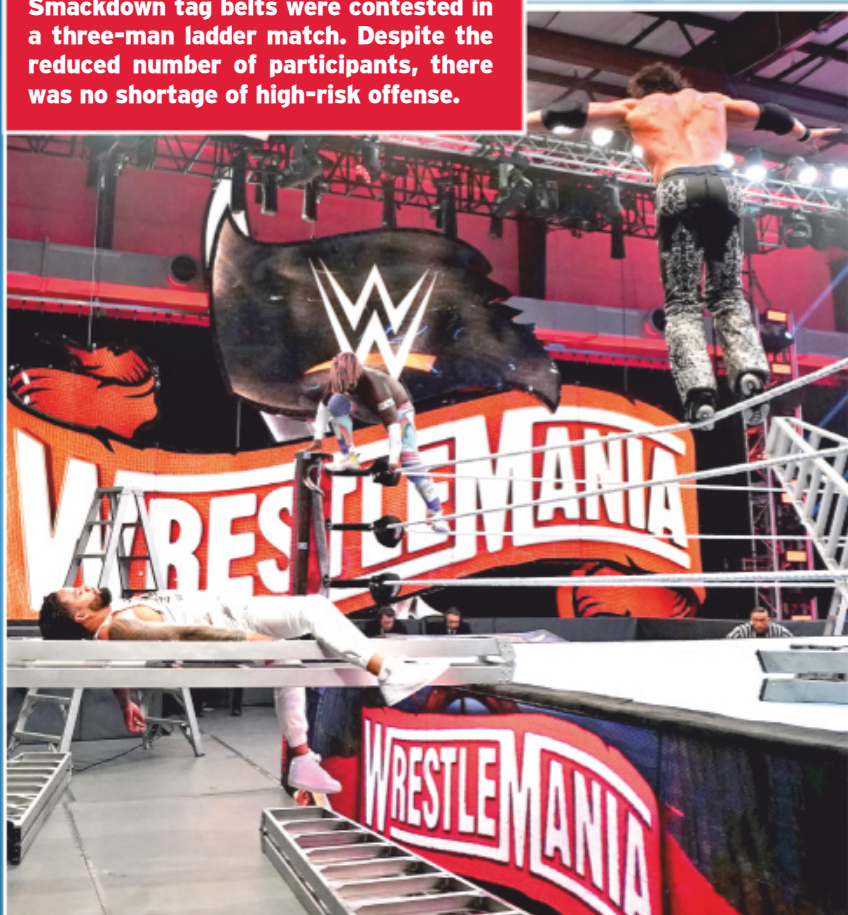


With a little help from his signature Helluva Kick, as well as his friends in "The Artist Collective," Zayn mounted his first successful defense of the Intercontinental championship ... barely.





In the age of social distancing, the Smackdown tag belts were contested in a three-man ladder match. Despite the reduced number of participants, there was no shortage of high-risk offense.



Though he was knocked off a ladder in the bout's final moments, John Morrison crash-landed with the tag belts in his possession.



JOHN MORRISON vs. JIMMY USO vs. KOFI KINGSTON

It wouldn't be WrestleMania without a blow-away ladder match. Under unusual circumstances, the Smackdown tag team title was defended in a singles match, as Morrison, Uso, and Kingston battled on behalf of their respective tandems. Morrison's star shone in this one, in the tradition of past ladder match luminaries like Shawn Michaels and Jeff Hardy. As Morrison, Uso, and Kingston fought atop the ladder, the belts were simultaneously unhooked by all three. A desperate struggle followed, and Morrison was the recipient of a headbutt that sent him sailing to the mat, belts in hand. Whether he realized it or not, he had just won the match.

THE WINNER

John Morrison in 18:31

THE REAL WINNER

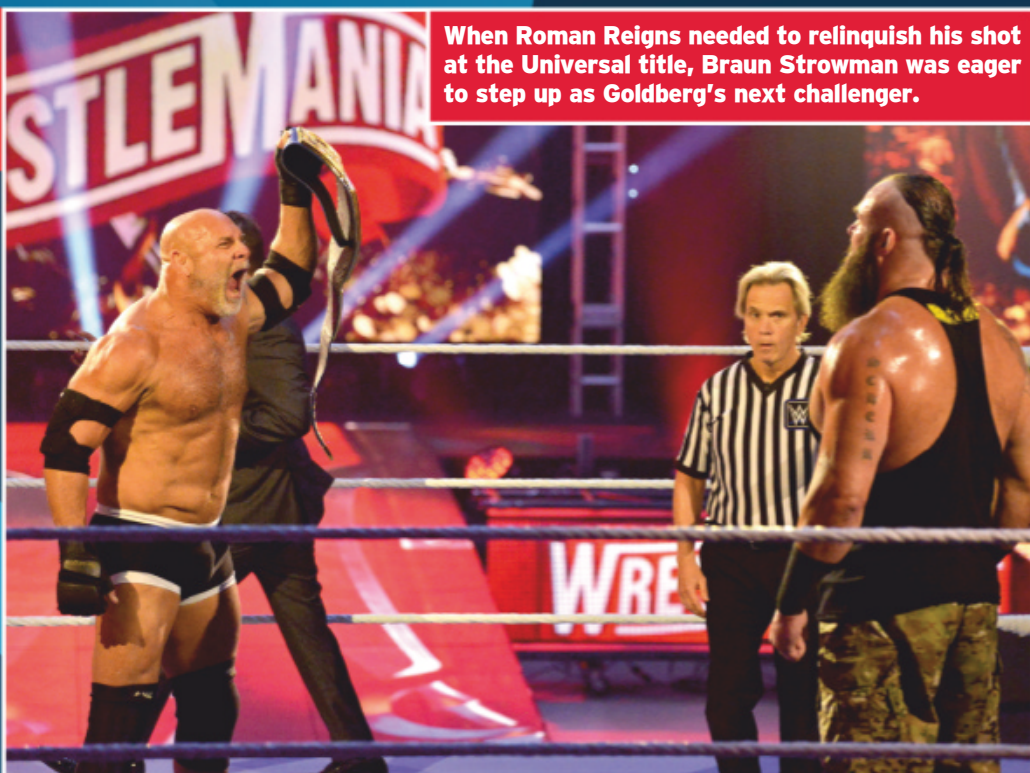
The Miz. Morrison's tag team partner was taken out by an injury, leading WWE to turn the match into a triple-threat singles encounter instead of a tag team affair. Thus, Miz was able to successfully "defend" the Smackdown tag title while watching the show from the comfort of his sofa. Not a bad gig!

THE REAL LOSER

Kofi Kingston. After achieving the pinnacle of his career last year at WrestleMania by winning the WWE World title—and celebrating in memorable fashion with family and friends—Kingston was relegated to an unsuccessful bid for tag team gold in the middle of the card. Not since King Kong Bundy went from challenging Hulk Hogan one year to chasing Little Beaver the next have we seen such a WrestleMania comedown.

GOLDBERG vs. BRAUN STROWMAN

No one expected this match to be a marathon by any stretch of the imagination. But also, no one could've imagined that Strowman would get up from not one, not two, not three, but *four* spears from Goldberg ... all before landing four powerslams to put the Universal champion down for the count. This was a short and brutal affair that may have signaled the end of Goldberg's storied career.



When Roman Reigns needed to relinquish his shot at the Universal title, Braun Strowman was eager to step up as Goldberg's next challenger.



Goldberg immediately leveled his opponent with three consecutive spears ... but Strowman weathered them all.

THE WINNER

Strowman by pinfall in 2:11

THE REAL WINNER

Braun Strowman. A powerhouse with incredible potential, Strowman had fallen into a WrestleMania funk in recent years, tag teaming with children and feuding with comedians. This time, he emerged as a force to be reckoned with, scoring a decisive victory over one of the most dominating competitors of all-time—in one of the shortest world title matches in WrestleMania history.

THE REAL LOSER

Roman Reigns. Originally slated to be Goldberg's opponent, Reigns made the tough decision to pull out of the match, in light of the COVID-19 crisis—a difficult, but wise choice, considering his weakened immune system. It's entirely possible that it would've been Reigns, and not Strowman, celebrating in triumph.

ANOTHER LOSER

"The Fiend." After holding sway over the WWE roster with his supernatural recuperative abilities, Bray Wyatt was put down almost effortlessly by Goldberg in a crushing Universal championship loss in Saudi Arabia. Now, the man who beat him has been thoroughly trounced himself, putting "The Fiend" that much further away from the title picture.



Not hedging his bets, Strowman delivered four straight powerslams to Goldberg before going for the pinfall.



Strowman's big 'Mania win also marks his first World title claim. Now that he's champ, it's anyone's guess who might be able to unseat him.



KEVIN OWENS vs. SETH ROLLINS

It was quite clear that Owens was most definitely out for payback as he punished the “Monday Night Messiah,” landing a couple of his trademark senton splashes before the battle spilled to the outside. When things got a little too heated for the calculating Rollins, he opted to whack “KO” with the timekeeper’s bell, drawing an intentional disqualification after around 10 minutes of action. But Owens wasn’t having it, and petitioned to keep the match going under no-DQ rules. The ref granted this reasonable request, and Owens took full advantage—putting Rollins through a ringside table with a spectacular leap from atop the WrestleMania sign. Owens dragged his weakened opponent back into the ring for a Stunner, and it was all over for Rollins.

THE WINNER

Owens by DQ in 9:59

Owens by pinfall in 5:22

THE REAL WINNER

Referee Rod Zapata. After a recent history of controversial calls (Hell in a Cell, anyone?), Zapata made the excellent decision to restart the match as a no-DQ affair ... neutralizing Rollins’ questionable antics in the process.

ANOTHER WINNER

Jon Moxley. With things as they now stand, it’s really looking like the former Dean Ambrose was entirely justified in jumping ship to AEW, as he is currently the most successful former Shield member by far.

THE REAL LOSER

Buddy Murphy. First, he found himself out of the cruiserweight title picture, and now Murphy is stuck backing a losing horse in Rollins. Sounds like time for a change in direction.



The two-fall showdown between Seth Rollins and Kevin Owens was a wild affair, epitomized by Owens’ incredible senton splash from atop the WrestleMania sign.



Ultimately, the match would end inside the ring, when Owens connected with a Stunner and scored the pinfall.





The cinematic Boneyard Match boasted such surprises as hooded druids (above) and the return of Biker Undertaker (below).



Less a traditional wrestling bout and more like a dark action film, the unconventional encounter ended when Undertaker buried AJ Styles alive.

UNDERTAKER vs. AJ STYLES

In the buildup to WrestleMania 36, fans were left wondering what a Boneyard Match might be. Those questions were answered as “The Dead Man” and “The Phenomenal One” tangled in a graveyard, with the winner being the one who could dump his opponent into an open grave and fill it with dirt using a front-end loader. Undertaker and Styles tossed each other across parked hearses, put themselves through plate glass, and struggled atop an abandoned tin shed during this unorthodox encounter. Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson attempted to assist their OC compatriot, as did a coterie of mysterious druids—usually allies of ‘Taker, but not this time. Yet nothing would deny “The Dead Man” his due, as the historic match ended when Undertaker kicked Styles six feet into the grave, boarded the loader, and solemnly covered his opponent with soil ... before riding off on his trademark chopper.

THE WINNER

Undertaker in 18:53

THE REAL WINNER

Michelle McCool. Like a gallant knight on a motorcycle instead of on horseback, Undertaker defended the honor of his wife, who had been slandered by Styles in the weeks leading to the match.

THE REAL LOSERS

Luke Gallows and Karl Anderson. Being AJ Styles’ stooges was a thankless position, as Undertaker demolished them almost as badly as he did Styles himself.

ANOTHER LOSER

Sting. He’s been the most talked-about potential WrestleMania opponent for Undertaker for years. But, with each passing event, that match seems less and less likely to ever materialize.



LIV MORGAN vs. NATALYA

What started as a semi-friendly encounter quickly developed into a “changing-of-the-guard” moment to kick off WrestleMania 36’s second night. After a brief feeling-out process and some impressive chain wrestling, Natalya seemed to be in control, applying a painful bow-and-arrow submission hold ... and eventually applying Sharpshooter. Morgan broke the latter hold with a small package, which then led to a series of back-and-forth pin attempts. To Natalya’s utter shock, Morgan eventually got the better of the series and got the three-count.

THE WINNER

Morgan by pinfall in 6:26

THE REAL WINNER

Becky Lynch. There are many who consider Nattie the best pure wrestler of the Raw women’s division. This means anything that drops her down the ladder of contention has to make it easier for the Raw Women’s champion to sleep at night.

ANOTHER WINNER

Bayley. Because who’s to say Natalya couldn’t have eventually wound up on Smackdown, challenging for her title as well?

THE REAL LOSER

Ronda Rousey. Ever since she first arrived in WWE, the “Most Dangerous Woman On The Planet” has been closely associated with Natalya, and anything that diminishes the third-generation competitor makes their still-anticipated showdown that much less appealing.

Though clearly the underdog against a veteran opponent, Liv Morgan not only held her own against Natalya, but actually picked up the victory.



OTIS vs. DOLPH ZIGGLER

WrestleMania has had its fair share of “fairytale moments” over the years—Randy Savage and Miss Elizabeth at WrestleMania 7 and John Cena and Nikki Bella at WrestleMania 33 come to mind—and we got to witness the latest of these moments as Otis and his “lady love” Mandy Rose celebrated mid-ring with an embrace and a kiss. It all came about after the master of the Caterpillar got his revenge against Rose’s supposed boyfriend with a satisfying victory (following a low blow from Rose and a crushing elbow to the chest). Not even the interference of the nefarious Sonya Deville helped Ziggler’s cause, as Rose slapped her former pal silly ... bringing a decisive end to their friendship.

THE WINNER

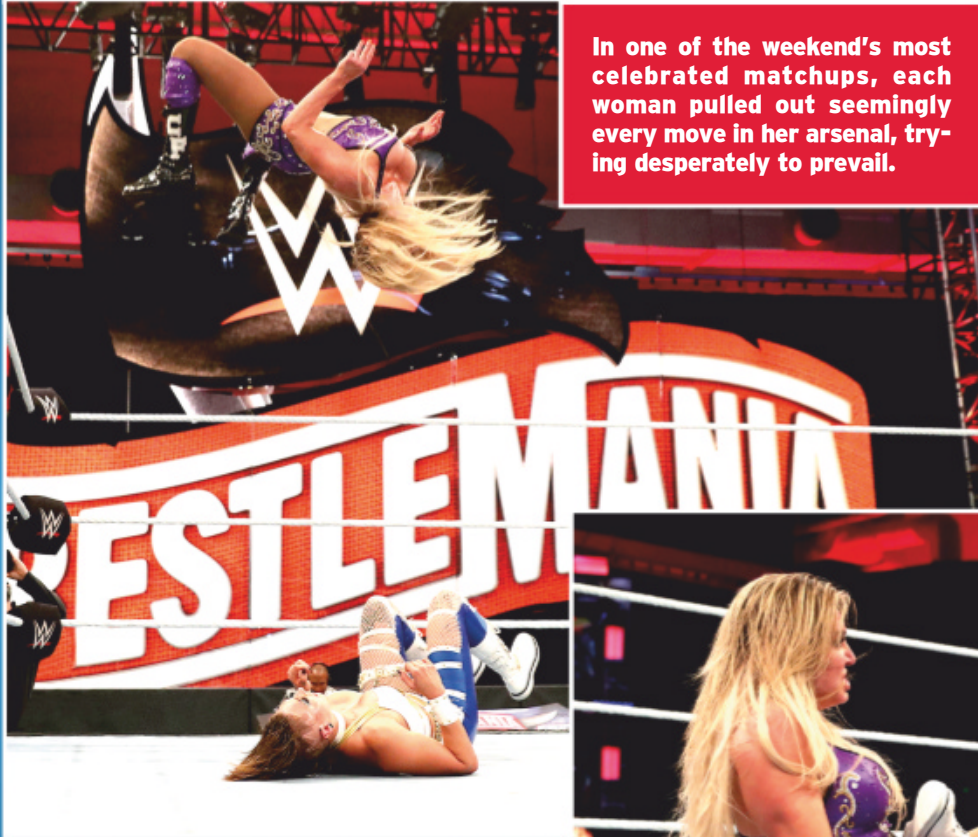
Otis by pinfall in 8:10

THE REAL WINNER

Mandy Rose. After a toxic romantic relationship with Ziggler and a toxic friendship with Sonya Deville, it looks like Rose has finally found happiness, in the most unlikely of places!

THE REAL LOSER

Sonya Deville. Exposed as a phony friend and humiliated on the biggest show of the year, Deville is most definitely the odd woman out in this scenario.



In one of the weekend's most celebrated matchups, each woman pulled out seemingly every move in her arsenal, trying desperately to prevail.

RHEA RIPLEY vs. CHARLOTTE FLAIR

There is no question that Rhea Ripley is a major star on the rise, and we can expect great things from her in the years to come. But this was just not her night, as she dropped her coveted NXT Women's championship to the most decorated female competitor on the WWE roster—adding to Flair's already unparalleled resume. The match was an instant classic and maybe the best display of athleticism in all of WrestleMania 36. Flair targeted Ripley's leg from the beginning—a common strategy for the second-generation grappler, as it sets up her feared Figure-8 submission. Ripley used her amazing strength to take it to the challenger as best she could, but Flair's toeholds, chop blocks, and kicks to the leg eventually did their damage ... making it difficult for Ripley to stay on the offensive. In the end, once finally trapped in the Figure-8, the Australian phenom had no choice but to tap out.

THE WINNER

Flair by submission in 20:27

THE REAL WINNER

Ric Flair. He may not have been there in person this time—as he was six years ago when Charlotte defeated Natalya for the NXT Women's title—but we're sure "The Nature Boy" was watching just as proudly nevertheless. His champion legacy lives on through his daughter.

THE REAL LOSER

The Raw brand. With Flair in possession of NXT gold, it's likely that she will be seen much less on Monday nights. This is a major loss for the red brand, as the new champ has long been one of its most popular stars.



Ultimately, Flair's signature Figure-8 leglock proved too much for Ripley, who had little choice but to tap out—netting Flair her second NXT Women's championship.



BOBBY LASHLEY vs. ALEISTER BLACK

Leaning on his strength advantage, Lashley focused on big power moves to overcome Black, employing a barrage of powerslams, suplexes, and bone-crushing whips to the corner. True to his reputation as an artful and adept striker, Black fought back with a series of kicks and leg sweeps. After hitting two running cross-bodyblocks that failed earn him a pinfall, Lashley lifted his opponent into a standing back-breaker, going for a submission. Lana climbed onto the ring apron and demanded that her man go for his trademark spear instead. Lashley obliged, dropping Black to the mat. The decision cost him big time, as his spear missed and Black instead landed a brutal Black Mass kick. It was that single blow that caused Lashley to look at the lights ... unable to answer the ref's three-count.

THE WINNER

Black by pinfall in 7:16

THE REAL WINNER

Rusev. "The Bulgarian Brute" had to be feeling vindicated not only watching the defeat of the man who stole his wife, but knowing that miscommunication from Lana directly led to the loss.

ANOTHER WINNER

Lio Rush. The former manager of "The All Mighty," Rush must be relieved to have parted ways with his former charge. Since their split, he's been thriving in NXT—with an impressive cruiserweight title reign to his credit—while Lashley is struggling more than ever.

THE REAL LOSER

Lana. After she directly caused her boyfriend to lose with her misguided interference and bad advice, it's reasonable to assume that the honeymoon period between these two is over.



Why Lana demanded Lashley finish the match with a spear when victory seemed well within his grasp will no doubt be thoroughly discussed by the two.



A Black Mass kick after a missed spear ended Lashley's hopes for a big WrestleMania win (above). Black now has all the momentum after his arm is raised in victory (below).



ROB GRONKOWSKI vs. MOJO RAWLEY

After snagging the 24/7 championship during the first night of WrestleMania, Rawley knew he was a marked man the second night. His fears came true when “The Hyped One” became the victim of a pile-on by an assortment of WWE competitors looking to take what he had. “Gronk” felt slighted by the events of the night before but made up for it by leaping onto Rawley from the balcony—clearing the crowd of would-be titleholders and scoring the pin to add the 24/7 title to his three Super Bowl rings.

THE WINNER

Gronkowski by pinfall in 0:32

THE REAL WINNERS

The 24/7 division. “Gronk” is the latest mainstream celebrity to take home the title ... each one adding to the belt’s very high profile.

THE REAL LOSER

R-Truth. Although things change in the 24/7 division from day to day, Gronkowski’s defeat of Rawley pushed the rapping wrestler further away from his beloved green-and-gold strap than he’s been in quite a while.

ANOTHER LOSER

Rob Gronkowski. Despite the fact that he got his first taste of WWE gold, fans of “Gronk” probably expected more from the gridiron great after joining WWE than winning the company’s comedy belt.

After being double-crossed by Mojo Rawley, Rob Gronkowski opted to sever ties with him—netting himself the 24/7 title in the process.



In their second defense, The Street Profits retained the Raw tag team championship. Here, Bianca Belair celebrates the victory with her husband, Montez Ford, and his partner, Angelo Dawkins.

THE STREET PROFITS vs. AUSTIN THEORY & ANGEL GARZA

The Raw tag team championship bout, though short, was filled with fast-paced action, as four young and hungry WWE competitors did everything within their power to not only walk out with gold, but also make a great impression on WWE’s largest audience of the year. It looked like we might see a title change when Theory hit a TKO on Dawkins, but Montez Ford broke up the pin with a top-rope splash, allowing his partner to roll over and score the pinfall for his team.

THE WINNER

The Street Profits by pinfall in 6:24

THE REAL WINNER

Austin Theory. When injury shelved Andrade (Garza’s original partner), this promising NXT competitor got elevated to the grandest stage of all—earning an instant tag team title shot at WrestleMania. Though unsuccessful, the match was the biggest break of his career.

ANOTHER WINNER

Bianca Belair. An on-screen alliance between Belair and the Profits was formed, opening the door for big things from Belair on the Raw roster.

THE REAL LOSER

Zelina Vega. Not only did her charges come up short, Vega’s post-match attempt to humiliate the tag champs was foiled when Belair hit the ring and let her have it.

EDGE vs. RANDY ORTON

The longest match of WrestleMania 36 also had arguably the most heated and emotional rivalry leading up to it, as Orton played some of his most devious psychological games in a bid to spoil the feel-good vibes of Edge's triumphant return to WWE after nine years on the shelf. (Edge's most recent 'Mania appearance was his 2011 defeat of Alberto Del Rio for the WWE World heavyweight championship.) "The Rated-R Superstar" tasted victory once again this time, but he went through the fight of his life to get there. With Last Man Standing rules in effect, the two competitors battled all over the Performance Center, winding up on top of an 18-wheeler truck, where a pain-wracked Edge, on the verge of tears, blasted the prone Orton with a Con-chair-to on the unforgiving steel to finally vanquish his former tag team partner.



Before the match even started, Randy Orton blindsided Edge while disguised as a camera operator.



Once upon a time, Edge and Randy Orton were tag team champions. Following Edge's return to the ring, they began a heated rivalry, which boiled over at WrestleMania 36.

THE WINNER

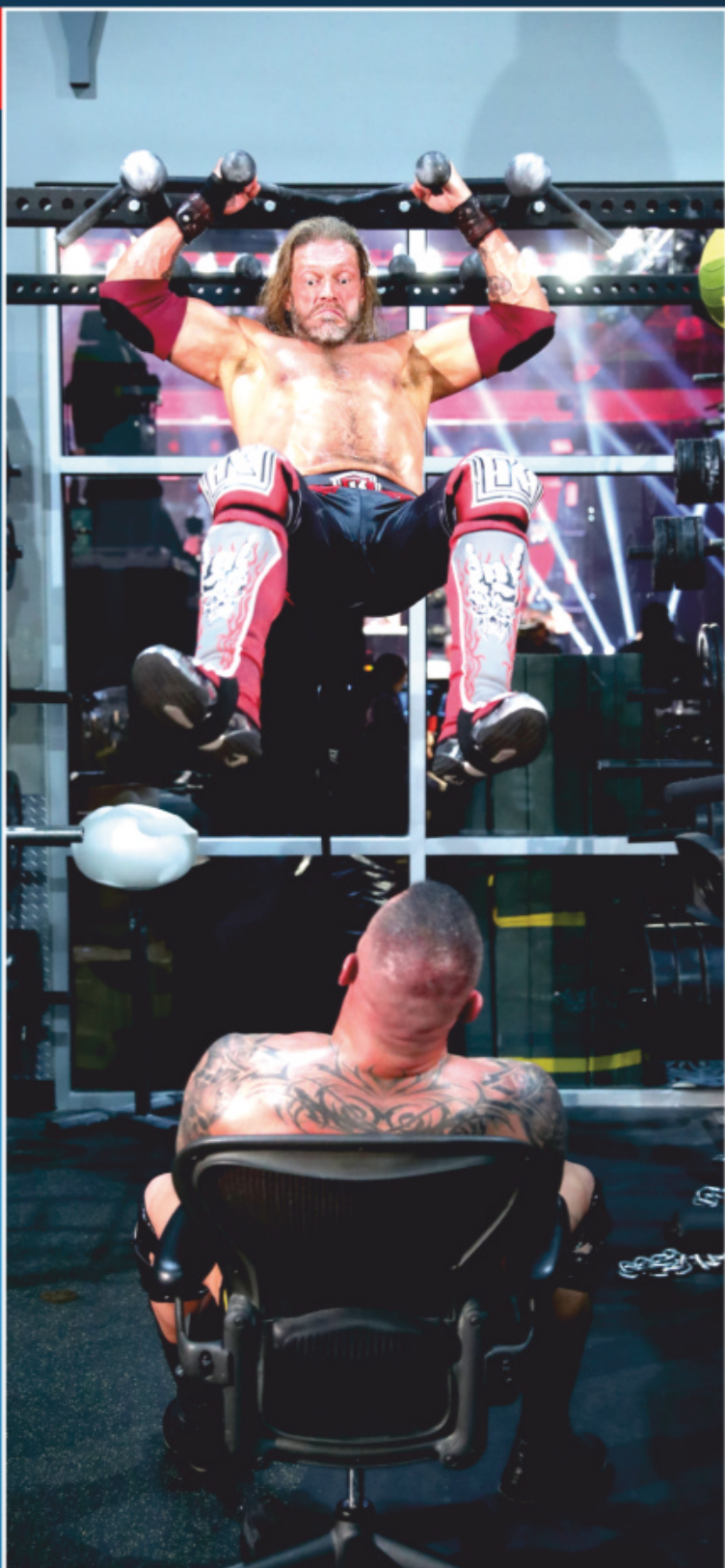
Edge in 36:41

THE REAL WINNER

Beth Phoenix. After suffering physical and emotional harm at the hands of Orton, the former Women's champion—and current loving wife of Edge—arguably hated "The Viper" even more than her husband did. Seeing Edge get his hand raised in victory was surely a satisfying moment for her.

THE REAL LOSER

Randy Orton. "The Apex Predator's" attempts to derail the comeback of "The Rated-R Superstar" crashed and burned, with Orton once again coming up short at WrestleMania—a recurring theme that many observers and critics have noted over the years.



Over 36 minutes, Edge and Orton brawled throughout WWE's Performance Center, exploring seemingly every room and continually finding new ways to hurt one another.



While Edge's Con-chair-to may have been the coup de grace, Orton was already out cold from this modified sleeperhold, deftly applied atop an 18-wheeler.



BAYLEY vs. SASHA BANKS vs. LACEY EVANS vs. NAOMI vs. TAMINA

The ultimate trial of endurance for a champion, this Fatal 5-Way elimination match gave Smackdown Women's champ Bayley the greatest test of her career, and she passed with flying colors. Tamina, the most intimidating participant of the bunch, was targeted by everyone from the get-go, leading to her being the first eliminated when the other four women piled on for a group pinfall at 6:25. Naomi was next to go, taking a backbreaker from Banks before submitting to the Banks Statement at 10:15. During a brief moment of dissension between Bayley and Banks, Evans laid out "The Boss" with the Women's Right to eliminate her at 13:24. Banks didn't hold a grudge, running in to deliver a backstabber to Evans that led to Bayley pinning her and retaining the gold.

THE WINNER

Bayley, last eliminating Evans in 19:17

THE REAL WINNER

Sasha Banks. "The Boss" pulled off a seemingly impossible feat—getting to the end of this match with her alliance with Bayley intact. At least for the moment...

THE REAL LOSER

Lacey Evans. Of the five women involved, Evans had arguably the most to prove, as she's been working to live up to her potential ever since leaving NXT. Getting so close to the title and coming up short was a crushing blow.

MORE LOSERS

Naomi and Tamina. Banks' former Team B.A.D. partners were clearly the "also-rans" of this match, which came down to the Sasha-Bayley-Lacey triumvirate in the end, as most predicted it would.



Alliances played a big role in the matchup, with Naomi and Lacey Evans doing their best to eliminate Bayley and Sasha Banks, respectively.



Bayley's new-found attitude and aggression served her well in this high-profile title defense.



Lacey Evans' breathtaking moonsault wasn't enough to win her the Smackdown Women's title. Thanks to the help of Sasha Banks (left), Bayley left WrestleMania as champion

JOHN CENA vs. THE FIEND



Once inside the Firefly Fun House (above), John Cena was forced to relive his greatest anxieties, beginning with a reenactment of his 2002 main roster debut (below).



THE WINNER

The Fiend (we think?) in 14:11

THE REAL WINNER

WWE's outstanding TV production team.

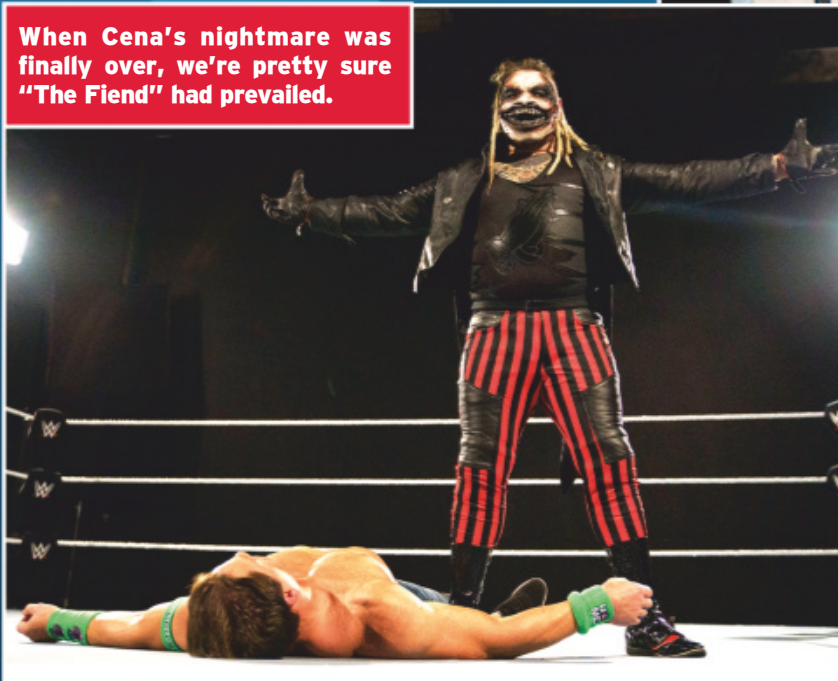
THE REAL LOSER

Jim Cornette—the former manager, promoter, and wrestling purist whose head likely exploded while watching this.

If you were wondering what a Firefly Fun House Match was leading up to this, chances are you were still wondering when it was over! How do we describe what we saw during this, perhaps the most unorthodox segment in pro wrestling history? It would be hard to even characterize the proceedings as a match, since it seemed more like a strange dream sequence, in which it was hard to tell if what we were seeing was even really happening or just a series of scenes out of the twisted mind of "The Fiend" Bray Wyatt. It started with Cena finding himself within the mysterious Firefly Fun House, only to be taken through a gauntlet of weird flashbacks: some from his own career (including his "Ruthless Aggression" debut against Kurt Angle and his stint as "The Doctor Of Thuganomics"), classic iconography from history (including *Saturday Night's Main Event* and the NWO), and even a brief trip to Wyatt's old "Wyatt Family" digs. In the end, "The Fiend" locked in the Mandible Claw on a thoroughly befuddled Cena, put him to sleep, and then stood over him in seeming victory. No matter what you thought of this completely unusual encounter, one thing's for sure: You'll never forget it.



When Cena's nightmare was finally over, we're pretty sure "The Fiend" had prevailed.



Part SNL, part David Lynch, the Firefly Fun House Match featured dark, absurd homages to both *Saturday Night's Main Event* and the NWO. Cena and Bray Wyatt did very little actual wrestling.



BROCK LESNAR vs. DREW MCINTYRE

Lesnar's matches are known for being brief, explosive affairs. But nothing could've prepared viewers for the lightning-quick WWE World heavyweight title match that would see McIntyre emerge triumphant at the conclusion of WrestleMania 36 and unseat "The Beast Incarnate" from the top of the wrestling world. From the opening bell, this became a battle of finishing maneuvers, with Lesnar jarring his Scottish challenger with two German suplexes and three F-5s that failed to earn him a pinfall. As a frightened Paul Heyman barked orders from ringside, the flustered Lesnar fell prey to an unbelievable four Claymore kicks before going down for the 1-2-3. As the show went off the air, McIntyre ascended the turnbuckles and held aloft the ultimate prize in the business—his potential finally fulfilled.

THE WINNER

McIntyre by pinfall in 4:28

THE REAL WINNER

Vince McMahon. Nearly a decade ago, the Chairman of WWE hand-picked McIntyre as his "Chosen One," pegging him for great things in the years to come. It took a very long time, and lots of setbacks along the way, but it's looking like McMahon may have been right all along.

THE REAL LOSER

Paul Heyman. Every time Lesnar's manager makes one of his cocky prognostications about his protege's inevitable victory, it opens him up to major embarrassment. Usually, Lesnar is able to help Heyman save face by crushing his opposition. But, this time out, the former ECW head honcho came away with a whole lot of egg on his face.

From the moment they first locked eyes, it was clear Brock Lesnar was in for a heck of a fight with Drew McIntyre.



Not only did McIntyre survive multiple German suplexes and Lesnar's first F-5 ... he kicked out at one. He'd go on to weather two more F-5s during this short contest.



After McIntyre connected with a total of four Claymore kicks, it was clear he was about to become WWE's first Scottish-born World champ.



An emotional McIntyre savors his well-deserved championship win, as the crowd, well ...



taking over my job (and this spot in the magazine) with the next issue. You may already know Kevin. He's freelanced for us for the past 14 years, was on the "PWI 500" rankings committee, and even had a run as the PWI Hotline 900 number host back in 2007 and 2008. He knows *PWI*, he knows the wrestling business, and, after working with him on a full-time basis these past few months, I am quite comfortable that we made the right decision in hiring him.

Some of the changes he's instituted are very easy to see: a free electronic version of *PWI Weekly*, *The PWI Podcast* being made available on YouTube, the revitalization of our Facebook page. What you will experience as he breaks the magazine free from my clutches is his work ethic and enthusiasm, two essential qualities that, admittedly, have begun to wane in this 64-year-old as retirement called my name.

The list of people I'd like to thank would fill whatever space I'm using for this farewell column. Most of them blur the line between business associates and

personal friends. All of them are very important to me, and I can't write a final column without singling out a few. I'll play it safe and list them alphabetically: Steve Anderson, Bill Apter, Laura Brubaker, Harry Burkett, Cliff Campo, Natalie Carollo, Al Castle, Jason Conlan, Steve Farhood, Eda Gibbs-Salley, Ken Gudaitis, Nick Karabots, Peter King, Frank Krewda, Sheila Langmacher, Bethany Lawler, Dave Lenker, Duane Long, Brandi Mankiewicz, Des McNulty, Ken Morgan, Gary Morgenstein, Dan Murphy, George Napolitano, Jennifer Orehowsky, Cecilio Padilla, Craig Peters, Andy Rodriguez, Dave Rosenbaum, Darlene Saks, Bob Smith, Greg Stevens, Dave Tyler, Frank Vitucci, and (both first and last) Stanley Weston.

And then there's you.

A few of you have been with us from the start; others joined along the way. Some of you are fans, some are wrestlers, some are promoters, some are professional writers who made my heart swell with pride when commenting on social media after my

STU SAKS' TOP 10

YOU'RE HIRRED: Nobody turns down a job twice and gets a third chance. Nobody but me. With college degree in hand, it was finally time to accept Peter King's offer in July 1979. Bill Apter was very wary of my arrival, I later learned. All the guys were teasing him about how much I knew about wrestling and my photographic ability. If Bill was feeling insecure, he had no reason to; he had it all over me in both areas ... and still does. I had no inkling that this would be a job-for-life. But I really loved working with these people and most of those to come over the next four decades. I had wonderful relationships with my direct bosses and owners. I never dreamed of this job growing up, but it truly turned out to be a dream job.

THE CUTE ARTIST: I worked with a great bunch of guys, but I really never wanted to date any of them. In June 1983, our art director, Ken Morgan, hired a gorgeous, petite brunette named Darlene. I think a few of us were interested, and I desperately wanted to stand out from the pack. One day, she walked past the editorial department to pick up a galley of type from the typesetter (something she later told me she was very reluctant to do in an office filled primarily with guys), and as her heels hit the tile floor, the obnoxious me said, "Excuse me, but do you have to make so much noise?" "Does it bother you?" she asked. "Why, yes." "Well, then ..." She proceeded to do a jig in front of me and rushed back to her desk. You know how the story ends.

RESCUED: The sale of *PWI* and *The Ring* to Golden Boy Promotions in 2007 did not go as well as I had hoped. Oscar De La Hoya and his folks were decent boxing promoters but in well over their heads when it came to publishing. Two years after the sale, I was called into the office of the Golden Boy lackey who had been installed as my boss to tell me that the wrestling magazines had been sold and that I would no longer be part of Golden Boy. He wasn't supposed to tell me who the new owners were, but it took me less than a minute to figure out that *PWI* had been re-purchased by Kappa Publishing. What a blessing! I have no doubt that Kappa's owner, Nick Karabots, worked out a favorable price, but that was not the only reason he made the deal. Mr. K, his wife, Athena, and their daughter, company president Des McNulty, have always been particularly kind to me. In my heart, that loyalty goes a long way. There is nothing I wouldn't do for these people. Two years later, by the way, Golden Boy relocated the operations of *The Ring* to Los Angeles and dismissed the magazine's remaining staffers without even giving them the opportunity to make the move. Had Kappa not bought back *PWI*, I probably would have been writing my final column 11 years ago.

TALKING HEAD: It was cool to be on the other side of the microphone for once, as WWE sought the viewpoint of an independent journalist for several of its DVD and Network documentaries. The first time they interviewed me, for *The True Story Of WrestleMania*, they hired an independent production company to handle audio and visual. Their equipment filled an entire hallway outside my office. Most of it was probably unnecessary, but I bet it impressed the other Kappa employees!

RIDE ALONG: The best day of the month in my early years at the company was Madison Square Garden Day. Bill Apter and I would take the LIRR to New York's Penn Station. First thing we'd do is go to the Holland Hotel (no longer there) a few blocks away to pick up our press credentials from Arnold Skaaland, who always seemed to be smoking a cigar and playing poker. Then we'd grab an awesome Italian dinner across the street at Angelo's (no longer there). Afterward, we'd head to Contact Studios (no longer there), which we rented for a few hours to take high-quality pictures of various WWF wrestlers. After that, of course, it was over to MSG to photograph the show.

retirement announcement, telling me how much these magazines meant to you as you began learning your craft at a young age.

The comments from fans in general made me feel as if I were able to eavesdrop on my own funeral. The outpouring of love overwhelmed me.

And now I'm left to consider life after *PWI*. It's funny; I gave so much thought to when and how I would leave that I really didn't pay much mind to what I would do afterward. I can't say I will write again, but I've already told Kevin that I'm just a call away if he needs any advice. It was suggested to me by one of the people on the list above that I have to be careful not to get slightly depressed after relinquishing a title that has become synonymous with my identity.

What to do with myself, *hmm*. I don't have any hobbies. I don't fish or play golf. I do love to play softball and, in addition to continuing to play part-time in a league where 90 percent of the participants are in still their athletic prime, I plan to play in a senior league.

I've always had a deep respect for firefighters, but I would never have had the courage to do what they do. So I'm in training to become a volunteer member of the Fire Police, which is a cool-sounding name for the folks who are responsible for traffic and crowd control at fires and township events.

I'll always follow wrestling to some degree; that's been in my blood since my grandfather took me to watch Sailor Art Thomas at the Miami Beach Auditorium when I was 12.

I've been asked by many, many people why I'm leaving. I thought about it a lot, and it really comes down to this. From the time I started grammar school to this very day, my life has been guided by schedules and deadlines. I want to see what life is like without having to consider either. It's really as simple as that.

My wife might have other thoughts. "The only time you need to be home," she said, "is to cook dinner."

I hope she's kidding.

Stu Saks
Publisher

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

A KING'S ESCORT: Bill and I flew to Memphis in September 1984 to cover the inaugural card of Pro Wrestling USA, a counter-WWF joint venture by Jim Crockett Promotions, the AWA, Georgia Championship Wrestling, Continental Wrestling, and others. Cooperation didn't last long, and PWUSA fell apart. But this trip was amazing. We had lunch at Jerry Lawler's home before heading over to Graceland with "The King" for a private tour. Then it was over to the Mid-South Coliseum, where Bill convinced Randy Savage and his brother, Lanny Poffo, to wrestle an impromptu empty-arena match with Jerry Lawler as ref. Later, we covered the actual card. It was nowhere near as memorable as what took place the rest of the day.

NO MAS: I received the plum assignment of photographing the second Sugar Ray Leonard-Roberto Duran fight in New Orleans on November 25, 1980. Since there was a big New Orleans Superdome wrestling show scheduled for two days later, I was able to photograph both events. I wound up staying at the Hyatt Regency and partying in the "Big Easy" for five days, all expenses paid.

CATASTROPHE AVERTED: I'm sure you know that we did boxing magazines here for years, but did you also know we published magazines on hockey, basketball, football, NASCAR, video games, the Royal Family, and so much more? My favorite special issues were the ones we did on various World Series. Unlike our monthlies and bi-monthlies, these specials were produced over a short period of time, with the final articles and cover being done in the overnight hours after the deciding game. This issue was quickly printed, transported to the city of the winning team, and on newsstands within 48 hours of the final out. The first of these was for the championship Red Sox in 2004. We finished the issue and transmitted the final pages to our printer at about 6 a.m. By 8:30, I was a mess and ready to go home. In walks boxing editor Eric Raskin, fresh off a good night's sleep. He sees a proof of the cover, which featured a photo of Pedro Martinez, who just happened to be identified in the headline as Manny Ramirez. Holy Sox! I called the printer, and, thankfully, the cover had not yet gone to press. Had it, I think I would have gone home and not come back.

LIVING LEGEND: One of my true pleasures was periodically speaking on the phone to my all-time favorite, Bruno Sammartino. He was such a class act. I campaigned hard in my column for Bruno and WWE to put aside their differences and for "The Legend" to be inducted in the Hall of Fame. I'm glad that it finally happened, but from a selfish standpoint, I wanted to be the one to make it happen. Bruno was holding tight to his anti-WWE stance because of its racy content and tolerance for the use of steroids. I was able to convince him that the company had adopted a more family-friendly tone and was enforcing a strict Wellness Program. He said he wasn't aware of that and that he'd consider resuming his relationship with the company, only they'd have to approach him. I contacted Shane McMahon and he said he'd tell his father. Nothing happened. Ultimately, it was Triple H, not Stu Saks, who made it happen.

JACKPOT: AEW's "Double Or Nothing" was a game-changer in the pro wrestling business. But as good as the company's debut show was, what I'll remember most are the Starrcast festivities in the days preceding the pay-per-view. I had set up a table to sell magazines and *PWI* T-shirts. Sales went pretty well, but what I'll take away from this experience was getting the opportunity to meet so many people who grew up on *PWI*, who expressed to me their appreciation for what our staff has done to enhance their wrestling fan experience over the years. I knew at the time that my retirement was imminent and, for me, this was the perfect send-off.



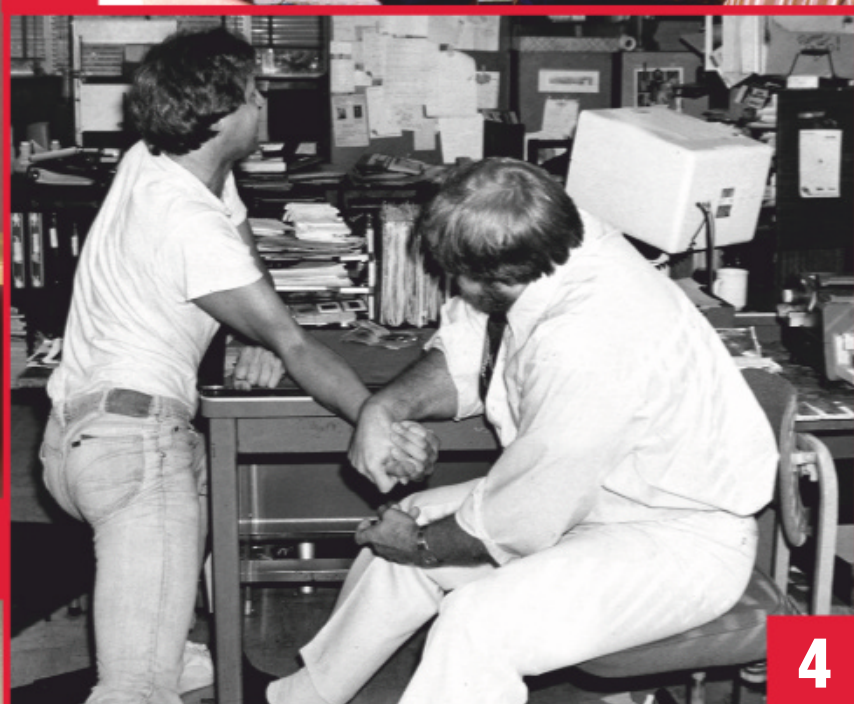
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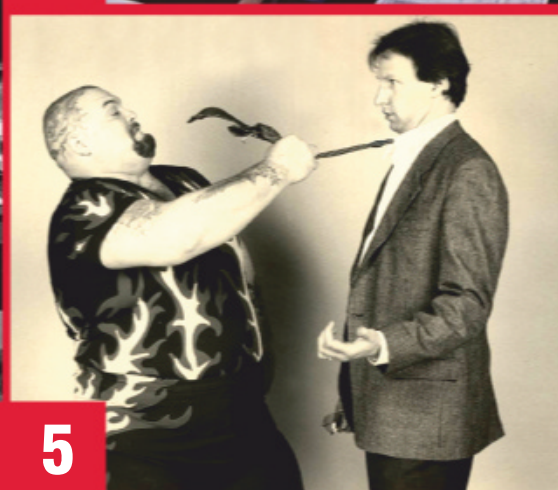
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Stu Saks with ... 1. The Grand Wizard; 2. Boxing writer Rich Countis & Thomas "The Hitman" Hearns; 3. Stanley Weston; 4. Ole Anderson; 5. Bam Bam Bigelow; 6. Dusty Rhodes; 7. Sgt. Slaughter; 8. The Iron Sheik; 9. Dallas Page; 10. Ted DiBiase

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with a subscription. We thought so.

INDEPENDENT ROUNDUP

BY KEVIN McELVANEY

IN THE WORDS of Dr. Ian Malcolm in *Jurassic Park*, “Life, uh... finds a way.” So, too, did the independent wrestling scene find ways to adapt to an unthinkable situation, as social distancing measures in response to COVID-19 made business as usual impossible. In recent years, WrestleMania weekend has played a significant role in the growth of the American indie wrestling scene. This is due, in large part, to the efforts of The Collective—a group of promotions that share talent and resources while putting on a series of events in the days leading up to ‘Mania. But, as coronavirus began to spread communally in the U.S., it became clear The Collective needed to postpone its planned events for April 2020. The official announcement came in the form of a tweet dated March 16.

“Today’s developments signal an equally devastating blow for our organization, our performers, our partners, and also our fans,” The Collective said. “It presents significant challenges to both our immediate and long-term futures, but with it brings hope in the face of the overwhelming support we have received from the wrestling community. We are presented with an opportunity to make history on the other side of this crushing global pandemic.”

With The Collective’s March 16 announcement, Game Changer

Wrestling—one of the organization’s primary players—called off its scheduled events and opted instead to host a two-night, empty arena run at an “undisclosed location” (which looked suspiciously like Philadelphia’s Voltage Lounge). The focus of these two shows was GCW’s second Acid Cup tournament, named after the late **Trent Acid**. Acid Cup 2 featured 16 prominent indie wrestlers, including **Nick Gage**, **Jordan Oliver**, and **Matthew Justice**. The finals of the tournament saw **Chris Dickinson** defeat **Blake Christian**, after beating **Shane Mercer**, **Allie Kat**, and **Pinkie Sanchez** in previous rounds.

While Night One consisted only of first-round tournament action, Night Two featured considerably more hijinks, including a battle royal (won by Gage) where cardboard cutouts of **John Cena** and rapper **Pitbull** were official entrants. Additionally, **Joey Janela** defeated **Jimmy Lloyd** in a “Social Distance Rules” match. For that bout, both competitors were humorously prohibited from getting within six feet of one another by referee **Kris Levin**—who even employed a tape measure at one point, in service of enforcing the rules.

All joking aside, the events—which were broadcast live on the



In the first round of GCW's Acid Cup 2 tournament, “Dirty Daddy” Chris Dickinson clobbers Pinkie Sanchez. Dickinson went on to beat Blake Christian in the finals the next night.

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

Independent Wrestling streaming service—did have a more sincere side. GCW also set up a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo, with the goal of raising as much money as possible for the talent competing on the show. At press time, the campaign had generated more than \$12,000 in donations—all of which (minus Indiegogo's 5 percent platform fee) would go directly to the wrestlers.

For a period of time, it appeared Freelance Wrestling had found a temporary workaround during the COVID-19 shutdown, in the form of its "Warehouse Wars" shows. The first event in the planned empty-venue series was scheduled for March 21, with a lineup that included a match between **Kylie Rae** and **Isaias Velazquez**. **Mustafa Ali** tweeted in support of the Chicago-based promotion, where he'd cut his teeth prior to signing with WWE. He wrote, "Scary times only exist when you feel like you're on your own. I'll be donating to cover all of the performers' pay for the first event." Sadly, the show was canceled following a "stay at home" order from Illinois governor **J.B. Pritzker**. Ali graciously told Freelance Wrestling not to return his donation, and instead to distribute the money to its wrestlers. Freelance Wrestling, like many other promotions nationwide, has asked fans to support talent by purchasing merchandise, while vowing to run more shows when it is safe to do so.

Before the shutdown in Washington, D.C., Prime Time Pro Wrestling presented Butch vs. Gore, a live event that was notable for prominently featuring LGBTQ talent throughout



With the help of a tape measure, referee Kris Levin ensures that Joey Janela and Jimmy Lloyd keep six feet apart in a special "Social Distance Rules" match.

the card. In the main event, 51st State champion **Effy** defeated **Faye Jackson** in a match that spilled out of the ring and all over DC Brau (the brewery where the festivities were held). Earlier in the evening, PTPW champ **O'Shay Edwards** retained the title against **Billy Dixon**, while **AC Mack** won an exciting seven-person scramble. PTPW co-founder **Lolo McGrath** even picked up a victory over MLW announcer **Mark Adam Haggerty**. The show inspired plenty of praise on Twitter, along with a glowing review by SB Nation's *OutSports* imprint ... IWA Mid-South put on three shows in March, beginning with the March 5 event, called "Let The Madness Begin." **Ace Perry** defeated heavyweight champ **Aaron Williams** in the main event, ending the latter's brief reign on top. Prior to that, **Haley J** won the IWA Mid-South Women's title by defeating **Alice Crowley** in a tables match. Haley J would go on to retain the belt on March 14 at "Battle Broads 3"—a special card featuring only female performers—against **Malia Hosaka**. Unfortunately, travel

restrictions kept previously announced competitors **Veda Scott** and **Sienna** from appearing on that show. However, Battle Broads 3 still went ahead as scheduled, with seven matches occurring in total ... On March 1, Beyond Wrestling presented "Beyond Championship Wrestling" at the Melrose Memorial Hall in Massachusetts. The event, which aired on FITE TV, was promoted as a sort of faux-TV pilot, begrudgingly attempted by the small, but still cutting-edge indie outfit. **Josh Briggs** reluctantly performed under the moniker "JOSH," while the promotion's co-founder, **Drew Cordeiro**, was set to challenge retired wrestler **Vin Gerard** for control of the company. Ultimately, that match did not take place, and it was instead **Jay Freddie** beating his longtime rival **Brandon Thurston** to win the keys to the Beyond kingdom. With no events scheduled through the early days of the COVID-19 crisis, Beyond Wrestling tentatively planned to debut a new season of its weekly live TV show, *Uncharted Territory*, at the end of April. □

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

BY KEVIN McELVANEY

COVID-19 HAS UPENDED the world of professional wrestling in the United States, and international promotions have certainly not been immune. While we'd originally planned to report only on events from the month of March and after, the canceling of shows due to the spread of coronavirus has slightly narrowed the scope of this section.

Following a public request from Japanese Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe** to postpone all sporting and cultural events, New Japan Pro-Wrestling obliged—clearing its schedule during what is normally an exciting period for the promotion. Among the canceled fare was the annual New Japan Cup, a tournament where the winner earns a guaranteed shot at the IWGP World heavyweight title.

Prior to Prime Minister Abe's order, New Japan held a series of events throughout the month of February, including **Manabu Nakanishi's** retirement show on February 22. In the main event of that card, Nakanishi teamed up with **Hiroyoshi Tenzan**, **Satoshi Kojima**, and **Yuji Nagata** to take on **Kazuchika Okada**, **Hirooki Goto**, **Hiroshi Tanahashi**, and **Kota Ibushi** in a losing effort.

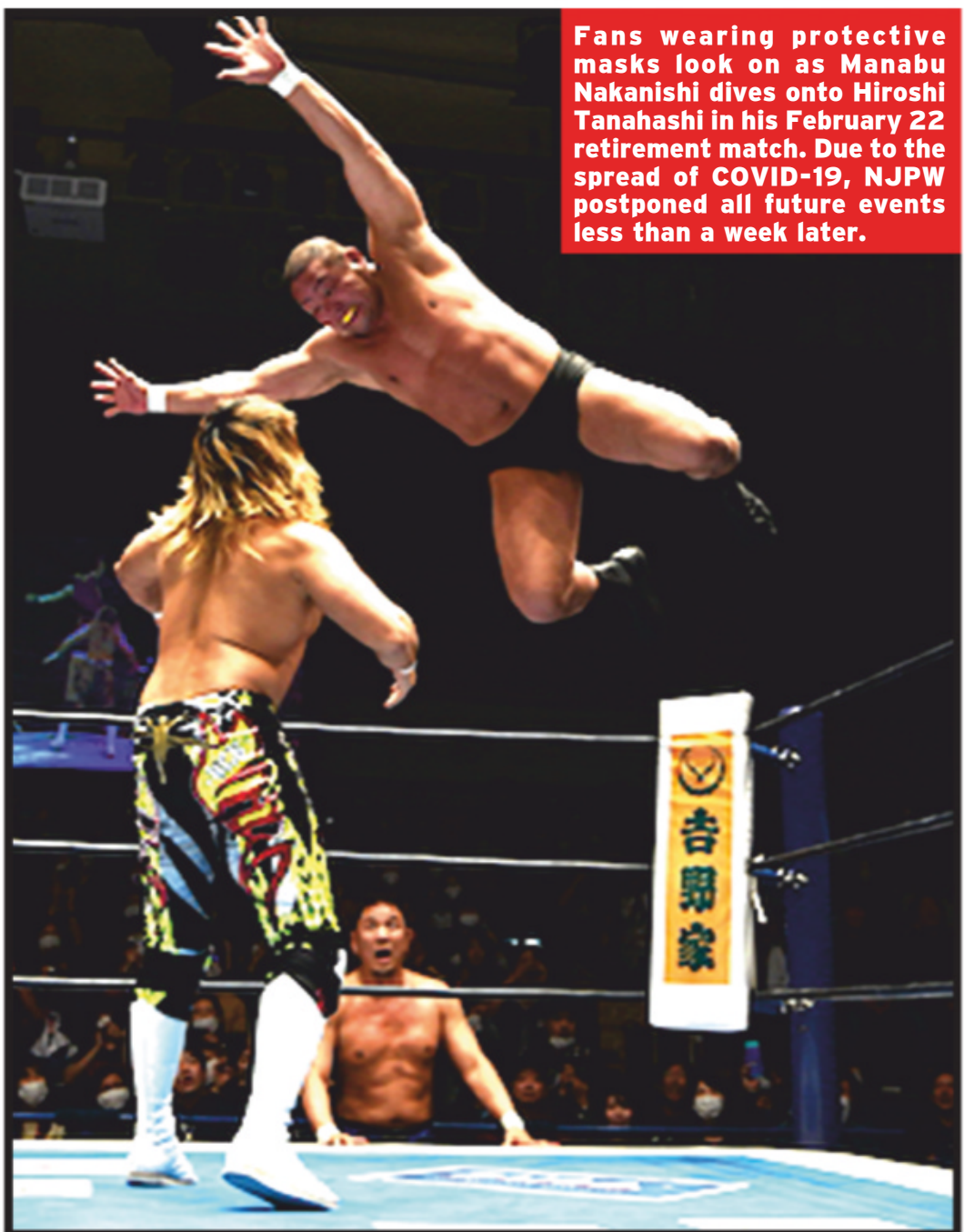
All Japan Pro Wrestling briefly joined its longtime rival in putting its events on hold, though it returned less than a month later. On March 23, in front of more than 1,000 fans, **Suwama** defeated Triple Crown heavyweight champ **Kento Miyahara**—putting an end

to his nearly two-year reign atop the promotion.

But even as All Japan took a few weeks off, other outfits across the country continued to operate while taking a few precautions. This resulted in a series of “no fans” shows, which were broadcast on various streaming services.

On March 8, Stardom streamed “No People Gate” for free on its

YouTube channel. The event took place in an unsettlingly empty Korakuen Hall and boasted a battle royal (won by **Super Strong Starlight Machine**) along with four other matches. Goddesses of Stardom champions **Bea Priestley** and **Jamie Hayter** retained their title against **Momo Watanabe** and **PWI Rookie of the Year** runner-up **Utami Hayashishita**. And, in the main



Fans wearing protective masks look on as Manabu Nakanishi dives onto Hiroshi Tanahashi in his February 22 retirement match. Due to the spread of COVID-19, NJPW postponed all future events less than a week later.

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event, World of Stardom champ **Mayu Iwatani** defeated **Saki Kashima** in a lumberjack match.

After a three-week hiatus, Dragon Gate returned with its own empty arena show at Kobe Sambo Hall. The main event saw **Dragon Dia**, **Kzy**, and **Yosuke Santa Maria** beat **Big R Shimizu**, **Eita**, and **Kaito Ishida**. Another highlight was a tag match, where **Masato Yoshino** and **Naruki Doi** defeated **BxB Hulk** and **Takashi Yoshida** by DQ.

As COVID-19 made its way to North America, Mexican promoters found themselves in a tough situation. Lucha Libre AAA continued to run shows into mid-March before ultimately making the call to postpone its celebrated Rey de Reyes tournament, scheduled for March 21. AAA's March 15 event—which would be its last for the time being—saw **Dave the Clown** win a four-way match for the vacant AAA Vive Latino title.

Two nights prior, on CMLL's *Super Viernes*, **Atlantis Jr.** and **Flyer** beat **El Hijo del Villano III** and **Templario** in the finals of a tournament to crown new Mexican National tag team champions. Following the show, CMLL announced it was canceling all planned events for the foreseeable future.

Predictably, as coronavirus began to wreak havoc on Italy, European wrestling promotions were also affected. In the U.K., Progress put upcoming shows on hold and promised ticketholders that the dates would soon be re-scheduled. Meanwhile, the promotion began offering old shows for free viewing on its Twitch channel.

Initially, Revolution Pro Wrestling vowed to continue with its previously scheduled events, while taking precautions to ensure fans and performers alike were safe. Ultimately, RevPro could not follow through on those intentions. In a statement on Twitter, founder **Andy Quildan** promised to instead begin offering free content for fans to watch online.

Carlito and Chris Masters show off the QPW tag belts, which they had just won at the promotion's Super Slam 2 event in Doha, Qatar.



PHOTO BY ANTHONY PIÑERO DELGADO

Quildan wrote, “I feel that entertainment and escapism is an important part of our society, and if we can’t do it from the live venues for the time being, we will do everything we can to do it from the comfort of our sofas!”

While Britain’s most influential wrestling promotions tried to plan ahead, WrestleTalk (a prominent news website) stepped up with a free empty arena show broadcast live on YouTube. Called “WrestleTalk Showcase: No Fans Monday,” it featured big names including **David Starr**, **Paul Robinson**, and **Gisele Shaw**. In the main event, real life lovebirds **Will Ospreay** and Bea Priestley squared off in a competitive, 19-minute bout that Ospreay ultimately won.

Fortunately, one of European wrestling’s most popular annual traditions was still able to take place, mere weeks before widespread social distancing would have surely shut it down. Over the weekend of March 6, Westside Xtreme Wrestling presented its prestigious 24 Carat Gold tournament in Oberhausen. British wrestling’s “Black Swan,” **Cara Noir**, took home this year’s trophy after besting **Mike Bailey** in the finals. Over the course of the tournament, Noir also defeated

Eddie Kingston, **Jeff Cobb**, and **Marius Al-Ani**.

NXT U.K. was also unaffected by the early spread of COVID-19, as WWE taped several weeks of programming in Coventry in early-March. During the tapings, NXT cruiserweight champ **Jordan Devlin** successfully defended against **Travis Banks**, **Toni Storm** beat **Isla Dawn** in singles action, and **Ilja Dragunov** won an 18-man battle royal to become the number-one contender to the NXT U.K. title.

Finally, on February 21, Qatar Pro Wrestling presented Super Slam 2, which was the long-awaited follow-up to its 2017 event. Nearly 6,000 fans gathered in Doha, Qatar, to see talent from all over the world compete. **Carlito** and **Chris Masters** defeated **Apolo & Apolo Jr.** and the team of **Jody Fleisch** and **Jonny Storm** to win the vacant QPW tag team championship, while **Caprice Coleman** and **Michael Elgin** took home the King of Ladders title and Middle East championship, respectively. To cap off the event, **Alofa** (son of **Afa Anoa’i**) won a four-way showdown with **Rob Van Dam**, **Chris Raaber**, and **Alberto el Patron** to capture the QPW championship. □

ARENA REPORTS

We encourage promoters and readers to e-mail results to:

PWIResults@yahoo.com

Please try to utilize the exact format you see in the "Arena Reports." Also, please distinguish between handicap matches and three- or four-way matches. And, when reporting the result of a handicap match, indicate the number of competitors and who was the last man eliminated. Finally, please note pinfall finishes. Following these guidelines will help us greatly and make it more likely that your report will be used.

SPOTLIGHT CARD OF THE MONTH

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO—AEW Revolution at Wintrust Arena: **Britt Baker & Penelope Ford** beat **Riho & Yuma Sakazaki** ... **Evil Uno & Stu Grayson** defeated **Scorpio Sky & Frankie Kazarian** ... **Jake Hager** defeated **Dustin Rhodes** ... **Darby Allin** pinned **Sammy Guevara** ... AEW tag team champions **Kenny Omega & Adam Page** beat **Nick & Matt Jackson** ... AEW Women's champion **Nyla Rose** defeated **Kris Statlander** ... **Maxwell Jacob Friedman** pinned **Cody Rhodes** ... **PAC** defeated **Orange Cassidy** ... **Jon Moxley** beat AEW World champion **Chris Jericho** for the title. (02-29-20)

—Spotlight photos by Lee South/AEW

CALIFORNIA

ELK GROVE—Supreme Pro Wrestling at Soccer World Indoor Arena: Heavyweight champion **Drake Frost** defeated **Marcus Lewis** ... **Cliff Hendrix, D-Rogue, & Dino Gainz** defeated **Chris Blaze, Christian Skye, & Joe Gamble** ... **The Luxurious Maniacs** beat **Eliza Hammer & Sir Samurai, Alpha Zo & D-Dre Fresh, and Nathan Brick & Tempo** in a four-way ... **Jeckles** defeated **Atreyu** ... **Abigail Warren** beat **Mayra Estrella** ... **Jack Cartwheel** defeated **Abigail Warren** ... Tag team champions **EZRA & Just Zack** beat **Bobby Callahan & Dante Daring** ... Extreme champion **Airon Skye** defeated **Harman Cheema** ... **Scot Robertson** defeated **Daniel Torch, Midas Creed, and Truex** in a four-way. (03-15-20)

—Matthew Armstrong

PACHECO—East Bay Pro Wrestling at 110 2nd Avenue: **Kenny K** beat **Nathan Brick** ... **Christian Skye & Victor Von Richter** vs. **Leon Ikusa & The Enforcer** ended in a double-countout ... NWA TV champion **Zicky Dice** beat **Rik Luxury** ... **Aleyah Mia Garcia, Cliff Hendrix, &**

Juicy Finau defeated **Brady McBride, Traps Wellington, & The Great Bambina** ... **Jacob Fatu** beat **Dino Gainz** ... Heavyweight champion **Fabuloso** defeated **Drake Frost** and **Sir Samurai** in a triple-threat. (03-14-20)

—Matthew Armstrong

LOS ANGELES—Bar Wrestling at Bootleg Theater: **BHK & Yuma** defeated **Che Cabrera & Tito Escondido** ... **Joey Ryan** beat **Ray Rosas** ... **Adrian Quest & B-Boy** defeated **Alex Ocean & Jamie Senegal** ... **Taya Valkyrie** defeated **Andy Brown** ... **Miranda Alize, Phoenix Star, & Zokre** beat **Douglas James, Delilah Doom, & Eli Everfly** ... **Willie Mack** defeated **Chris Bey**. (03-11-20)

—Miguel Ortiz

CONNECTICUT

BETHANY—Northeast Wrestling at NEW Arena: **Mike Gamble** defeated **Brett Ryan Gosselin** ... **JT Dunn** beat **Chris Battle** ... **Brad Hollister** beat **Chuck O'Neil** ... **Wrecking Ball Legursky** defeated **Richard Holliday** ... **Karen Bam Bam** defeated **Little Mean Kathleen**

... **Bobby Orlando** beat **Kenny Bengal** ... **RJ Rude & Zane Bernando** defeated **Bear Boulder & Bear Bronson** by DQ ... **Vincent** defeated **Mike Verna** ... Live champion **Christian Casanova** beat **Delirious** ... **Keith Youngblood** defeated **Brad Hollister, JT Dunn, and Wrecking Ball Lergursky** in a four-way. (03-07-20)

—Brian Solomon

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WASHINGTON—Prime Time Pro Wrestling at DC Brau Brewing Company: Pan-Afrikan Diaspora champion **Trish Adora** defeated **Ashton Starr** ... **Roni Nicole** beat **Dani Jordyn** ... Tag team champions **Eel O'Neal & Jordan Blade** beat **Ariela Nyx & Logan Black** and **Solo Darling & Willow Nightingale** in a three-team elimination match ... **Lolo McGrath** pinned **Mark Adam Haggerty** ... Heavyweight champion **O'Shay Edwards** defeated **Billy Dixon** ... **Still Life with Apricots and Pears** defeated **Lady Frost** ... **AC Mack** beat **Russell Rogue, Corinne Mink, Devon Rogue, MV Young, Erica Leigh, and Jared Evans** in a seven-person elimination



Dustin Rhodes may have underestimated Jake Hager, seen here delivering his version of a Vader bomb. Hager would go on to win his in-ring debut for AEW.

match ... 51st State champion **Effy** defeated **Faye Jackson**.
(03-07-20)

—*Canaan Merchant*

FLORIDA

FORT MYERS—Real Pro Wrestling at Crowne Plaza: *Florida Classic Cup 2020, First Round*: **Julian Kelevra** beat **Justin Reese** ... **Andre Reyes** defeated **Logan Cruz** and **Wheezy T** in a triple-threat ... **Boone** beat **Christian Andrews** ... **Romeo** defeated **Sean Hawley** ... **Marcus McCobb & Richie Paradise** defeated **Ashley Mayberry & Ruby Flyer** ... **Nick Abrams** beat **Justin Matthews** ... Top Crown champion **Leo Knox** defeated **Zack Monstar** ... Ruby Flyer won a 15-person battle royal.
(03-15-20)

—*Duane Long*

PORT RICHEY—American Combat Wrestling at Gulf View Event Center: **Apollo Jr.** beat **Andrea Reyes** and **Azrael Row** in a triple-threat ... **Kahuna Khan & Kiki Roberts** defeated **Randy Wentworth & Tex McTex** ... **Jarett Diaz** defeated **Jake Shadows** ... **Katalina Perez** beat **Ellie** ... **Eli Knight & Malik Bosede** defeated **Gabriel Lacey & Victor Vences** ... **Kennedy Kendrick** vs. **Sage** ended in a no-contest ... **Aaron Epic & Zach Cooper** defeated **Jay Sky & Richard King**.
(03-11-20)

—*Duane Long*

ORLANDO—WWE NXT at Orlando Live Events: **Rik Bugez** defeated **Tino Sabbatelli** ... **Indi Hartwell** defeated **Emily Andzulis** ... **Jeet Rama** beat **Cal Bloom** by DQ ... **Kacy Catanzaro & Shotzi Blackheart** beat **Briana Brandy & MJ Jenkins** ... **Tyler Breeze** defeated **Dorian Mak** ... **Danny Burch & Oney Lorcan** beat **Aleksandar Jaksic & Tehuti Miles** by DQ ... **Chelsea Green** defeated **Marina Shafir** ... **Killian Dain** beat **Denzel Dejournette** ... **Kushida** defeated **Bobby Fish**.
(03-07-20)

—*Duane Long*

MELBOURNE—WWE NXT at Melbourne Auditorium: **Jorge Bolly** defeated **Jake Atlas** ... **Omari Palmer** beat **Mohamed Fahim** ... **Catalina Garcia & Rita Reis** beat **Briana Brandy & MJ Jenkins** ... **Arturo Ruas** defeated **EJ Nduka** ... **Wesley Blake & Steve Cutler** defeated **Rinku Singh & Saurav Gurjar** ... **Shotzi Blackheart** beat **Taynara Conti** ... **Cesar Bononi & Tino Sabbatelli** defeated **Denzel Dejournette & Nick Ogarelli** ... Women's champion **Rhea Ripley** defeated **Chelsea Green**.
(03-06-20)

—*Duane Long*

GEORGIA

ROYSTON—Alternative Pro Wrestling at The Royston Gym: **Young DC** pinned **Dynamic Dexter** ... **James Boulevard**



Darby Allin (seen wrenching on Sammy Guevara's arm) proved at Revolution that he's one of All Elite Wrestling's brightest young stars.

beat **Josh Aeronson** ... Southern States champion **Jaxon Carter** pinned **Eddie Honcho** ... **Jacob Ashworth** beat **Hoss Michaels** ... North Georgia champion **Stryknyn** pinned **Scott Mayson**.
(03-13-20)

—*Brian Edens*

ROYSTON—Alternative Pro Wrestling at The Royston Gym: **Scott Mayson** pinned **Zach Mosley** ... **Young DC** beat **Zero** ... **Jacob Ashworth** pinned **Kyle Phillips** ... Tag team champions **Dynamic Dexter & Stevie Ray Frost** defeated **Josh Aeronson & Corey Savior** ... North Georgia champion **Stryknyn** pinned **Eric Adamz** ... Southern States champion **Jaxon Carter** beat **James Boulevard** by DQ.
(03-6-20)

—*Brian Edens*

AUGUSTA—Livewire Wrestling at American Legion Post 63: **Big Game James & Karl Hager** defeated **Matt Odam & William Blackwell** ... **JC Walker** defeated **Kyoshi** ... **Christian Garrett** defeated **JD Rush** ... **JC Walker & James Houston** beat **Voodoo Jack & Scratch McKinley** ... **Adrian Davis** defeated **Mike Cobb** ... **Blanco Loco** vs. **Dream Girl Ellie** ended in a draw ... **Matt Sells & Jeremy Cruz** defeated **Dynamic Dexter & Stevie Ray Frost**.
(3-7-20)

—*Billy Johnson*

IDAHO

GARDEN CITY—Idaho Wrestle Club at Expo Idaho: **Theodoric Lionheart** defeated **Bobby Jaxon** ... **Tonatiuh** beat **Ultimo Accion Punketo** ... **Cassidy & Paradise** defeated **Big John Henry & Bronco Bill Lee** ... Heavyweight champion **Garibai** defeated **Ric Knight** ... **Trai Matthews** beat **Rusty Livings** ... Potato Bowl champion **Jay Crews**

defeated **Marcus Anderson, Mega Mosca, Damien Black, James Grimm, and Parisi** in a six-man elimination match.
(02-29-20)

—*Brian Westcott*

ILLINOIS

CHICAGO—Freelance Wrestling at Logan Square Auditorium: **Isaias Velazquez** beat **Danhausen** ... **Elayna Black & Jesus Bryce** beat **Laynie Luck & Acid Jaz** ... **Bucky Collins & Mikey** defeated **Davey Bang & Missa Kate, Chris Castro & Matt Knicks, Marino T & Philly C**, and tag team champions **Space Monkey & Shane Sabre** in a gauntlet match for the title ... IWTW Independent champion **Warhorse** beat **Alex Zayne, Colt Cabana, and Kobe Durst** in a four-way ... Legacy champion **Effy** defeated **Mark Wheeler** ... **GPA** beat **Arik Cannon, Dan the Dad, Darin Corbin, Gary Jay, and Kenny Sutra** in a six-man scramble ... **Craig Mitchell** vs. **Robert Anthony** ended in a double-pin.
(03-06-20)

—*Mike Bessler*

COLLINSVILLE—Glory Pro Wrestling at the Columbus Plaza: **Storm Grayson** defeated **Davey Bang** ... **Kylie Rae** pinned **Blair Onyx** ... **Dan Adams & Allie Kat** beat **Danhausen & Elayna Black** ... **Jake Lander** defeated **Ethan Price** ... United Glory tag team champions **Idris Abraham & Joe Coleman** defeated **Logan & Sterling Riegel, Camaro Jackson & Kenny Alfonso, and Matt Knicks & Chris Castro** in a four-corner match ... **Hyan** pinned **Seishin** ... **Kevin Lee Davidson** beat **Nick Gage** in a falls-count-anywhere match ... **Mike Outlaw** defeated **Suge D** and **Paco Gonzalez** in a triple-threat ... **Jake Something** beat **Barackus, Clayton Gainz, and Steve Manders** in a four-corner match ... **Davey Vega & Mat Fitchett** defeated **Timmy Lou Retton & White Mike** ... **Kody Lane** beat



Kenny Omega almost seems like he pities Matt Jackson as he connects with his signature V-Trigger strike. Omega and Adam Page retained the AEW tag title in their match against The Young Bucks.

Midwest Territory champion **Hakim Zane** by DQ ... Crown of Glory champion **AJ Gray** pinned **Chris Dickinson**. (03-01-20)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

INDIANA

JEFFERSONVILLE—IWA Mid-South at The Arena: **Thunderkitty** defeated **Shawna Reed** ... **Harley Fairfax** beat **Ava Lee** ... **Alice Cowley** defeated **Loki Havik** ... **Kayla Kassidy** defeated **Nashay Laveau** ... **Nevaeh** beat **Jessie Belle Smothers** ... **Amber O'Neal** defeated **Becky Idol** ... Women's champion **Haley J** defeated **Malia Hosaka**. (03-14-20)

—Maura Wright

JEFFERSONVILLE—IWA Mid-South at The Arena: **Slade Porter** defeated **Kai Fayden** ... **Davey Bang** & **Loki Havik** beat **Dick Michaels** & **Tyler Lydol** ... **Zodiak** defeated **Dean Jacobs** ... **Drew Dillinger** beat **August Matthews** ... **Espiritu Maya** beat **Slade Porter** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Lukas Jacobs** defeated **Aeroboy** ... **Gary Jay** defeated **Alice Crowley**. (03-07-20)

—Maura Wright

IOWA

WALCOTT—SCWPro at Walcott Coliseum: Heavyweight champion **1 Called Manders** beat **Benjamin Carter** ... **Rahne Victoria** defeated **Izzy B** ...

Deonn Rusman & **Robin Steele** defeated **Connor Braxton** & **Mason Beck** ... *Championship Series Tournament, Semifinals:* **Travis Titan** defeated **Shane Hollister** ... **Dante Leon** defeated **Matt Cage** ... **Joeasa** beat **Xander Killen** ... **Johnny Wisdom** defeated **Corn Boii** ... *Final:* **Travis Titan** defeated **Dante Leon**, **Joeasa**, and **Johnny Wisdom** in a four-way. (03-07-20)

—Louie Dee

KENTUCKY

LOUISVILLE—Ohio Valley Wrestling at The Davis Arena: **KTD**, **Steve Michaels**, & **Tony Bizo** defeated **D'Mone Solavino**, **DL3**, & **Luscious Lawrence** ... **Dustin Jackson** defeated **The Haitian Sensation** ... Tag team champions **Big Zo** & **Cash Flo** beat **Brandon** & **Brent Tate** ... **Melvin Maximum** beat **Ashton Cove** ... **Dapper Dan** defeated **Crixus** by DQ ... **Corey Storm** & **Dimes** beat **Hy-Zaya** & **Jay Bradley** in a ladder match ... **William Lutz** defeated **Nigel** ... **Tony**

Gunn defeated heavyweight champion **Maximum Khan** for the title. (03-07-20)

—Mike Bessler

PARIS—Prime Time Wrestling at The PTW Sportatorium: **The Zodiak** defeated **Rob Valor** ... **Jordan Kage** pinned **Reverend Blake** ... **Kimba** pinned **Tony Evans** ... **Henry Shaw** pinned **Jacob Ratliff** ... **Adam Swayze**, **Chris Majors**, **Christopher Michael Lotus**, & **Referee Aaron** beat **Brandon Taggart**, **Austin Tyler Morris**, **DC**, & **Gideon Weinstein**. (03-01-20)

—Dale Bass

PARIS—Prime Time Wrestling at The PTW Sportatorium: Elite champion **Christopher Michael Lotus** pinned **Jay Donaldson** ... **Rob Valor** pinned **Johnny Suede** ... **Rob Valor** pinned **Ray Waddell** ... **Nate Gnarly** pinned **Rev. Ronnie Roberts** ... **Rev. Blake** pinned **Tony Evans** ... **Jacob Ratliff** defeated **Jimbo**, **Warlock**, **Henry Shaw**, **Icon**, and **Alex Angel** in a six-man scramble ... **Adam Swayze** & **Chris Majors** defeated tag team champions **Big Cuz** & **Rex** by DQ ... Heavyweight champion **Brandon Taggart** pinned **Lord Crewe**. (02-28-20)

—Dale Bass

MARYLAND

SALISBURY—WWE Raw at Wicomoco Civic Center: **Liv Morgan** beat **Sarah Logan** ... **Shayna Baszler** defeated **Natalya**

... U.S. champion **Andrade** defeated **Humberto Carrillo** ... **Charlotte Flair** & **Becky Lynch** beat Women's tag team champions **Asuka** & **Kairi Sane** by DQ ... **Kevin Owens**, **Montez Ford**, & **Angelo Dawkins** defeated **Akam**, **Rezar**, & **Buddy Murphy** ... **Drew McIntyre** beat **Seth Rollins**. (03-01-20)

—Harry Burkett

MASSACHUSETTS

MELROSE—Beyond Wrestling at Melrose Memorial Hall: **Josh Briggs** defeated **Colin Delaney** ... **Daniel Garcia**, **Kevin Blackwood**, & **Puf** defeated **Alex Reynolds**, **Mark Sterling**, & **VSK** in a Body Slam Challenge ... **Chuck O'Neil** beat **Artie Facts** & **Doug Hole** in a handicap match ... **Mack Hetfield** defeated **Slade** ... **Anthony Green** defeated **Bull James** ... **Christian Casanova** vs. **Wheeler YUTA** ended in a double-pin ... *Beyond Championship Wrestling Heavyweight Title Tournament, Semifinals:* **Robo** defeated **Mike Verna** ... **Richard Holliday** beat **Anthony Bowens** ... *Final:* **Richard Holliday** defeated **Robo** ... **Jay Freddie** beat **Brandon Thurston** ... **John Silver** defeated **Tony Deppen**. (03-01-20)

—Brian Solomon

MICHIGAN

WARREN—Xtreme Intense Championship Wrestling at the Hot Rock Sports Bar: **Dread King Logan** pinned **Tommy Vendetta** ... **Mysterious Movado** pinned **Eli Shelton** ... **Willie Watts** & **Dickie Watts** defeated **Billy Ray Daniels** & **Jay Maynard** ... **Isiah Broner** pinned **Jumal Kyng** ... **Drizakeo** defeated **Dirty Black Assassin** by DQ ... **Dre Jacobs** & **TJ Meyer** defeated **Kevin Kalloway** & **Sean Tyler** ... **Mitch Hewitt** pinned **The Gameboy** ... **The DBA** & **Jaimy Cxxxx** beat **Jack Price** & **Adam Wick** ... Midwest champion **Malcolm Monroe III** vs. **Aaron Orion** ended in a no-contest ... **Aaron Orion**, **Jack Price**, & **Tommy Vendetta** defeated **Malcolm Monroe III**, **Dre Jacobs**, & **Adam Wick**. (03-15-20)

—Leonard Brand

KALAMAZOO—Independence Pro Wrestling at the Ybar & Bistro: **Dave Crist** pinned **Jimmy Jacobs** ... **Zak Ibiza** pinned **Jake Something** ... **Jimmy Shalwin** pinned **TJ Meyer** ... Michiana champion **Aaron Orion** pinned **Hakim Zane** ... **Roger Lanier** pinned **Damian Chambers** ... **Josh Raymond**, **Dennis the Ref**, & **Terry VanAvery** defeated **Tommy Vendetta**, **Adam Wick**, & **Isiah Broner** ... Heavyweight champion **Karam** pinned **Malice**. (03-14-20)

—Leonard Brand

ROYAL OAK—WWE NXT at Royal Oak Music Center: Tag team champions **Matt Riddle** & **Pete Dunne** defeated **Brendan Vink** & **Shane Thorne** ... **Candice LeRae** pinned **Aliyah** ... **Cameron Grimes** pinned **Dexter Lumis** ... **Dio Maddin** defeated NXT champion **Adam**

Cole by DQ ... **Keith Lee** & **Dio Maddin** beat **Adam Cole** & **Roderick Strong** ... **Austin Theory** pinned **Bronson Reed** ... **Mia Yim**, **Kayden Carter**, & **Tegan Nox** defeated **Dakota Kai**, **Raquel Gonzalez**, & **Santana Garrett** ... **Tommaso Ciampa** pinned **Damian Priest**.
(03-07-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

FLINT—Pure Pro Wrestling at the Iceland Arena: **Derrick Draven** pinned **Fabian Ash** ... **The Hillbilly Wrecking Crew** defeated **Mason Keller** & **Metal Head Shaun** ... **Tay Rizer** pinned **Dylan Derringer** ... **Aaron Orion** & **Jack Price** defeated **James Alexander** & **Nick Xero** ... **Hannah Henderson** pinned **Tenshi** ... **Malice** pinned **Stone Rockwell** ... **Cody Manning** & **Mr. One Night Only** defeated tag team champions **Cobra TA** & **Freedom Ramsey** for the title ... **Lord Asmodeus**, **Great Nokken**, & **Kanecki** defeated **Ace Evans**, **Moe Evans**, & **Road Rash** and **Father Time**, **Jimi Grey**, & **Jheras Grey** ... Michigan heavyweight champion **Samson Real** pinned **Dylan Night**.
(03-07-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

BROWNSTOWN—Clash Wrestling at the Brownstown Sports Center: **Juntai** pinned heavyweight champion **Cameron Skyy** for the title ... **Jessie V** & **Stratos Fear** defeated **DeManzo** & **Devil's Right Hand** ... **Palmer Cruise** pinned **James Alexander** ... **Breyer Wellington** pinned **Dragon Greed** ... **Miss Hannah** defeated **Mysterious Movado**, **TJ Meyer**, & **Freedom Ramsey** in a four-way ... **Joe Coleman** & **Idris Abraham** defeated tag team champions **Tommy Treznik** & **Ded Vaughn** for the title ... **Juntai** pinned **Cameron Skyy**.
(03-06-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

WALDRON—Championship International Wrestling at the High School Gymnasium: **Nitro** & **Malice** defeated **Ace Evans** & **Sean Lawhorn** ... **Tenshi** pinned **Hannah Henderson** ... **Mysterious Movado** pinned **El Mano del Diablo** ... **Chuck Wagon** pinned **Frank Isaac Anderson** ... **The Soultaker** defeated **Rod Street** by DQ ... **Chuck Weeden** & **The Soultaker** defeated **Rod Street** & **Deputy Days** ... **Nitro** & **Malice** defeated **Peddo the Killer Clown** & **Ghengis Clown** ... Midwest champion **Kenny Urban** pinned **Andy Chene** ... **Mysterious Movado** won a battle royal for the vacant heavyweight title.
(02-29-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

MELVINDALE—Pro Wrestling All Stars at Play Atlantis: **John Bruske** pinned **Mikey Mana** ... **Paul Bowser** won a battle royal ... **Peter B. Beautiful** defeated **Heidi Katrina** in a beauty pageant contest ... Cruisercore champion **El Ridiculoso** won an 11-man scramble, last eliminating **Atlas Hytower** ... Tag team champions **Mysterious Movado** & **Maltese Tiger** defeated **Chuck Stein** & **Joseph Schwartz** ... Heavyweight champion **Palmer Cruise**

defeated **Kevin Kalloway** and **Paul Bowser** in a triple-threat.
(02-28-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

MINNESOTA

ROSEVILLE—F1RST Wrestling at Rose-dale Center: **JDX** beat **Rylie Jackson** ... **Heavy Metal Lore** defeated **Atomic Super Thunderfrog** ... **Scott Story** & **Sebastian Taylor** defeated **Bill Williams** & **Petey Brown** ... **Arik Cannon** defeated **Dak Draper** ... Uptown VFW champion **Priscilla Kelly** beat **Elayna Black**, **Kara Noia**, and **Laynie Luck** in a four-way ... **Angel Dora-do** defeated **Brandon Gore**, **GPA**, and **Kal Creed** in a four-way ... **Kyle Pro** beat **Lucas Calhoun** ... **Danhausen** vs. **Orange Cassidy** ended in a no-contest ... **Danhausen** & **Orange Cassidy** defeated **Darin Corbin** & **Heavy Metal Lore** ... **Wrestlepalooza** champion **Air Wolf** beat **Jah-C**.
(03-07-20)

—*Daniel Sorensen*

MISSISSIPPI

RALEIGH—Battlezone Championship Wrestling at the Smith County AG Center: **Chase Bell** defeated **DJ Cyprian** and **Rhett D. Thrhett** in a triple-threat ... Junior heavyweight champion **Braxton Hunter** pinned **Simon Philips** ... **Jaxon Slade** won a 15-man battle royal, last eliminating **RJW** ... **Jaxon Slade** beat **Korey Konstantine** to win the **DeeDee Williamson Memorial Cup** ... **Jesse Dalton** & **JD Jenkins** defeated **Chris Black** & **Frankie Thomas**, **Joey Abel** & **The Faroh of Phunk**, and **The Nightmare Jeremiah** & **Ursa Major** in a four-corners match to become Battlezone tag team champions ... **Tom Prichard** & **Xtian Blake** beat **Cassidy Riley** & **Monty Warbucks**.
(03-14-20)

—*Nikki Kent*

RALEIGH—Battlezone Championship Wrestling at the Smith County AG Center: **Faboo Andre** & **Simon Philips** defeated **Rey Fury** & **Braxton Hunter** ... **Korey Konstantine** pinned **Dale Springs** to win a 15-man battle royal ... **Cassidy Riley** beat **Jaxon Slade** ... **Amber Rodriguez** pinned **Cassandra Golden** ... **Monty Warbucks** defeated Capitol City champion **Xtian Blake** for the title ... **Joey Abel**, **Faroh of Phunk**, **Hornswoggle**, & **JD Jenkins** beat **Chris Black**, **Vladimir Koloff**, **The Nightmare Jeremiah**, & **Frankie Thomas**.
(03-13-20)

—*Nikki Kent*

MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS—Mid-Missouri Wrestling Alliance at the South Broadway Athletic Club: **Bobby D** defeated **Freddie Fury** ... **Ricky Cruz** beat **Damion Cortess** ... **Damian Blade** pinned **Keith Smith Jr.** ... Heavyweight champion **Frankie D** defeated **Waco** ... **Gary Jackson** beat **Ryan Ash** ... **Moondog Rover** defeated **Attila Khan** by DQ ... **Rick Ruby** pinned **Jimmy D**.
(03-14-20)

—*Patrick Brandmeyer*

ST. CHARLES—Ring of Honor at the Family Arena: **Cheeseburger**, **Eli Isom**, & **Nicole Savoy** defeated **PJ Black**, **Brian Johnson**, & **Sumie Sakai** ... **Marty Scurll**, **Brody King**, & **Flip Gordon** beat **Jay Briscoe**, **Mark Briscoe**, & **Slex** ... **Dan Maff** pinned **Alex Shelley** ... **Vincent** & **Bateman** defeated **Silas Young** & **Josh Woods** ... **Angelina Love** pinned **Session Moth Martina** ... **Dalton Castle** defeated **Jeff Cobb**, **Kenny King**, and **Tracy Williams** in a four-corner match ... **Bully Ray** beat **Caprice Coleman** ... TV champion **Dragon Lee** pinned **Dak Draper** ... Tag team champions **Jay Lethal** & **Jonathan Gresham** defeated **Bandido**



Though larger than most of her opponents, Nyla Rose is surprisingly agile. This spear took a toll on Kris Statlander, who ultimately lost the match by pinfall.

& **Rey Horus** in a non-title match ... **Rush** beat **Mark Haskins** and ROH heavyweight champion **PCO** for the title in a three-way. (02-29-20)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

NEVADA

LAS VEGAS—Future Stars of Wrestling at Sam's Town Live: **The Unguided** beat **Mondo Rox & Robby Lit** ... **Kyle Hawn** defeated **Owen Travers** and **Shaggy McLovin** in a three-way ... Tag team champions **Kenny King & Shogun Jones** defeated **Big Money Clutch & Sugar Brown** ... No Limits champion **Ice Williams** beat **Funny Bone**, **Remy Marcel**, and **TJP** in a four-way ... *Grand Title Tournament, First Round*: **Tessa Blanchard** defeated **Lacey Ryan** ... **Michael Elgin** beat **Tom Lawlor** ... **Willie Mack** defeated **Sefa Fatu** ... **Alexander Hammerstone** beat **Chris Adonis** ... **Chris Bey** defeated **Daga**. (03-14-20)

—Brady Hicks

NEW JERSEY

VOORHEES—Women's Superstars United at Colossal Sports Academy: **Karen Bam Bam** defeated **Little Mean Kathleen** ... **Paris Van Dale** beat **Gabby Gilbert** ... Spirit champion **Davienne** defeated **Basic Becca** ... **Corinne Mink** beat **Eddy McQueen** ... **Gabby Ortiz** defeated **Veda Scott** ... Champion **Brittany Blake** beat **Tasha Steelz**. (03-15-20)

—Nicole Carter

WRIGHTSTOWN—United Wrestling Coalition at Kelly's Banquet Hall: **Tony Chini, Francesca, Kleetus, & Hobo Harry** defeated **Kurt Bale, The Hollywood Hooligan, JJ Cruz, & Courageous Cruz Jr.** ... **Iron Bull Argus** pinned U.S. champion **The Orphan** for the title ... **Warhead** pinned **Jake Reaper** ... **Dom Truex** defeated **Lucha La Raza** and **Joe Wolf** in a triple-threat ... **Mr. Spectrum** pinned **Charlie Bonifer**. (03-14-19)

—Joseph Grana

WILLIAMSTOWN—Intergender Bonanza at H2O Wrestling Center: **Ray Lyn & Zoey Skye** beat **Xavier Cross & Stan Stylez** ... **DDS** defeated **Vanessa Azure** ... **Max the Impaler** defeated **Marc Angel** ... **Jamie Senegal** beat **Allie Recks** ... **Ray Lyn** won a 30-person battle royal for the Intergender Bonanza title. (03-07-20)

—Kevin McElvaney

NEW YORK

NEW YORK—Warriors of Wrestling at St. Finbar's Catholic Church: **Abdul Nasir & Anthony Gamble** beat **Brendon Luka & Ivan** ... **Chris Steeler** beat **Essa Rios** ... **Vicious Vicki** defeated **Deanna Diaz** ... **JustNeph & Tony Paige** beat **Darius Carter & TJ Marconi** ... **The Godfather** defeated **Salvatore Valcaro** ... **Vinny Pacifico** defeated **Gangrel** ... **Jack Gallow & Jason Carrion** beat **Chris Romano & Justin Adams** and tag team champions **Isaiah Wolf & Marcus Marquee** for the title ... No Limits

champion **Tyree Taylor** defeated **Jacob Fatu & Frat Boy Farva** in a triple-threat ... *No Limits Title Number-one Contender Tournament, Semifinals*: **Dexter** defeated **Roger Mendez** ... **Mike Harvey** defeated **Mr. Grim** ... *Final*: **Dexter** defeated **Mike Harvey**. (03-06-20)

—Brian Solomon

SYRACUSE—WWE Smackdown at War Memorial Arena: Intercontinental champion **Braun Strowman** defeated **Cesaro** ... Smackdown tag team champions **The Miz & John Morrison** beat **Dash Wilder & Scott Dawson** and **Big E & Kofi Kingston** in a triple-threat... **Elias** vs. **Shinsuke Nakamura** ended in a no-contest ... **Shorty G** beat **Drew Gulak** ... Women's champion **Bayley** defeated **Lacey Evans** ... **Roman Reigns, Jimmy Uso, & Jey Uso** defeated **Sheamus, Robert Roode, & King Corbin**. (03-01-20)

—Justin Thompson

NORTH CAROLINA

HIGH POINT—Revolution Wrestling Authority at Southside Recreation Department: Cruiserweight champion **Cain Justice** pinned **Court Montgomery** ... Central Carolinas champion **Snooty Fox** pinned **Asaafi** ... **Rob Killjoy** pinned **Chris Valo** ... Women's champion **Samantha Starr** defeated **Allie Recks** and **Lindsay Snow** in a triple-threat ... **Sean & Mark Denny** defeated tag team champions **Michael Devine & Ali Steele** for the title ... **Bozworth** beat **WrestleForce** heavyweight champion **Eric Darkstorm** by DQ ... Extreme champion **Damien Wayne** pinned **Chance Prophet** ... Heavyweight champion **Timothy Zbyszko** defeated **Shannon Moore** and **Mike Orlando** in a triple-threat. (03-08-20)

—Brett Wolverton

HUBERT—Premier Wrestling Federation at Hashimoto Hall: **Rocky Webster** defeated **Joseph Everhart** ... **Flex Simmons** defeated **Isaac Fox** ... **James Anthony** beat **Donnie Ray** and **Gem Stone** in a triple-threat ... **BoJack** defeated **Kent Wolf & Pretty Boy Lane** in a handicap match ... **The Wrestling Ranger** defeated **Kayden Pierre** ... Unified tag team champions **Joe Harrison & Mickey Fulp** beat **Lance Lude & Rob Killjoy** ... **Jamal the Titan** defeated **TGA Moss** ... **Antonio Ace & Chance Rizer** vs. **Bobby Wohlfert & Metalhead** ended in a no-contest ... **Jakob Hammermeier** beat **Mason Myles** by DQ. (03-06-20)

—Ricky Lineberger

NORTH DAKOTA

MINOT—Cloud 9 Wrestling at The Clarion Hotel: **Tyler Colton** beat **Nick Nelson** ... **Tommy Lee Curtis** defeated **Chris Chaos** ... **Mentallo** defeated **Joseph Anderson** ... **Mr. Inkredible** beat **Macen Mayhem** ... *Tag Team Title Tournament, Final*: **Jack Ledger & Kevy Chevy** defeated **Brandon**



A battered and bloodied MJF connects with a piledriver. His win over Cody Rhodes at Revolution was undoubtedly the biggest of his career thus far.

Nytroe & Seto Kobara to win the title ... Heavyweight champion **Bob Brennan** defeated **AJ Sanchez**. (03-14-20)

—*Nick Beaudine*

WILLISTON—Cloud 9 Wrestling at The Old Armory: **Jack Ledger** defeated **Seto Kobara** ... **Brandon Nytroe** defeated **Kevy Chevy** ... **Macen Mayhem** beat **Tommy Lee Curtis** ... **AJ Sanchez** & **Nick Nelson** defeated **Chris Chaos** & **Tyler Colton** ... **Mr. Inkredible** beat **Mentallo** ... Heavyweight champion **Bob Brennan** defeated **Joseph Anderson**. (03-13-20)

—*Nick Beaudine*

OHIO

LANCASTER—Premiere Wrestling Alliance: **Randy Forrest & Cripton** vs. **Jeffrey John** & **LA Cordova** ended in a draw... **Kevin Cruik** defeated **Anthony Rey**... Heavyweight champion **Jimmy Fahrenheit** defeated **Bryan Blade** ... **Bjorn** beat **Joey Black** ... **Tommy Forte** pinned **Jordan Carlyle** ... **The U.S. Outlaw** defeated **Morgan Taylor** by DQ ... **Tommy Forte** & **U.S. Outlaw** beat **Kevin Cruik** & **Morgan Taylor**. (03-07-20)

—*Tony Ashbrook*

CLEVELAND—WWE NXT at Agora Theatre: Tag team champions **Matt Riddle** & **Pete Dunne** defeated **Brendan Vink** & **Shane Thorne** ... **Bronson Reed** pinned **Dexter Lumis** ... **Candice LeRae** pinned **Santana Garrett** ... Heavyweight champion **Adam Cole** defeated **Dio Maddin** by DQ ... **Keith Lee** & **Dio Maddin** defeated **Adam Cole** & **Roderick Strong** ... **Damian Priest** pinned **Cameron Grimes** ... **Aliyah**, **Dakota Kai**, & **Raquel Gonzalez** defeated **Mia Yim**, **Tegan Nox**, & **Kayden Carter** ... **Tommaso Ciampa** pinned **Austin Theory**. (03-06-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

COLUMBUS—WWE NXT at Express Live!: Tag team champions **Matt Riddle** & **Pete Dunne** defeated **Brendan Vink** & **Shane Thorne** ... **Mia Yim**, **Kayden Carter**, & **Tegan Nox** defeated **Dakota Kai**, **Raquel Gonzalez**, & **Santana Garrett** ... **Dexter Lumis** beat **Dio Maddin** ... **Damian Priest** defeated **Cameron Grimes** ... **Austin Theory** beat **Bronson Reed** ... **Candice LeRae** defeated **Aliyah** ... **Keith Lee** & **Tommaso Ciampa** defeated **Roderick Strong** & **Adam Cole**. (03-05-20)

—*Leonard Brand*

OKLAHOMA

TULSA—Body Progression Wrestling at The Wrestle Center: **Ethan Cole** defeated **Brawler Morrison** and **Steven Cruze** in a triple-threat ... 365 champion **Giganto** beat **Ray Martinez** ... Lionheart champion **Tommy Dean** defeated **Mr. Nasty** ... **Mike Starr** & **Sam Stackhouse** defeated **Killbane** & **Thrash** ... **Evelyn Carter**



While **Orange Cassidy** silenced many of his critics with his breakout performance at **Revolution**, he had no choice but to tap out to **PAC's** pet hold, **The Brutalizer**.

beat **Erica** ... Oklahoma champion **Derek James** defeated **Ethan Cole**. (03-14-20)

—*Wendy Case*

BETHANY—Wrestling in the USA at Venue 23: **Gemini** & **Kevin James Sanchez** defeated **EmpCW** tag team champions **Gorgeous Garcia** & **Nytroni A'Teo** for the title ... **BPW** Oklahoma champion **Derek James** beat **MLP** ... **Dean Lambert** defeated **Ryan the Ripper** ... **WFC** heavyweight champion **Sam Stackhouse** beat **Tommy Dean** ... **CM Burnham** & **Draven** defeated **Dexter Hardaway** in a handicap match ... **Brawler Morrison** beat **BCW Buzzsaw** champion **Revan** for the title ... **Drake Gallows** defeated **BCW** heavyweight champion **Father Padge** for the title. (03-13-20)

—*Wendy Case*

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA—Game Changer Wrestling at Voltage Lounge: **Joey Janela** beat **Jimmy Lloyd** in a “Social Distance Rules” match ... **Nick Gage** won a 13-man battle royal ... *Acid Cup 2 Tournament, Quarterfinals:* **Shane Mercer** defeated **KTB** ... **Blake Christian** beat **Matt Justice** ... **Chris Dickinson** defeated **Allie Kat** ... **Jordan Oliver** defeated **Nick Gage** ... *Semifinals:* **Chris Dickinson** beat **Shane Mercer** ... **Blake Christian** defeated **Jordan Oliver** ... *Finals:* **Chris Dickinson** defeated **Blake Christian**. (03-20-20)

—*Kevin McElvaney*

PHILADELPHIA—Game Changer Wrestling at Voltage Lounge: *Acid Cup 2 Tournament, First Round:* **KTB** defeated **Cole Radrick** ... **Shane Mercer** defeated **Lucky 13** ... **Allie Kat** pinned **Atticus Cogar** ... **Jordan Oliver** pinned **Ellis Taylor** ... **Matthew Justice** beat **Jimmy Lloyd** ... **Blake Christian** defeated **Benjamin Carter** ... **Chris Dickinson** beat **Sanchez** ... **Nick Gage** pinned **1 Called Manders**. (03-19-20)

—*Kevin McElvaney*

ELIZABETHTOWN—International Wrestling Cartel at Court Time Sports Center: **Angelik** defeated **Shawn Phoenix** ... Tag team champions **Bulk Nasty** & **Zander Gabriel** beat **Andrew Palace** & **Spencer Slade**, **Hardcore Hoooven** & **Jami Jameson**, and **Remy Lavey** & **Korbin Borne** in a four-way ... **Atticus Cogar** defeated **Jaxon Argos** to qualify for the Super Indy 19 tournament ... **Elijah Dean** & **Zach Nystrom** beat **Jimmy Nutts** & **Joseph Brooks** ... **RC Dupree** beat **High Stakes** champion **Mambo Italiano** for the title ... **Duke Davis** & **Ganon Jones Jr.** beat **Ethan Page** & **Josh Alexander** ... Super Indy champion **Johnny Patch** defeated **Facade** ... **Bill Collier** defeated **John McChesney** ... **Allie Kat** & **Katie Arquette** defeated **Queen Aminata** & **Ray Lyn** ... **Jimmy Vegas** beat **IWC** champion **Jack Pollock** by referee's decision in a title vs. career match. (03-14-20)

—*Kevin McElvaney*

PHILADELPHIA—Game Changer Wrestling at Voltage Lounge: **Rickey Shane Page** defeated **Ruckus** ... **Adrian Quest** vs. **Tony Deppen** ended in a no-contest ... **Matthew Justice** defeated **Effy** ... **AJ Gray** beat **Jimmy Lloyd**, **KTB**, **Pinkie Sanchez**, **Saieve Al Sabah**, & **Steve Sanders** in a six-man match ... **Atticus Cogar**, **Eddy Only**, & **Gregory Iron** vs. **Charlie Tiger**, **Ellis Taylor**, & **Griffin McCoy** ended in a no-contest ... **Nick Gage** defeated **Ophidian** ... **Shlak** defeated **Jeff King** ... **Blake Christian** beat **Joey Janela**. (03-13-20)

—*Andrew Coppola*

YORK—Susquehanna Wrestling Organization at St. John Lutheran Church: **Ace Dallas** defeated **Matt Vertigo** ... **Cody Rose** & **Trent Farrell** beat **Big Dom Truex** & **Tony Chini** ... **Alan Clayball** & **Sage Matthews** defeated **Ken Andrews** & **Kimberly Spirit** ... **General Kiesel** defeated **Live** champion **Zac Belmont** for the title ... Uprising champion **Suicide Myers** beat **Mason Martin** ... **Prince Piranha** defeated **Benny Slater**, **Simon Ryme**,

Van Valley, and **Wally West** in a five-way ... Unlimited champion **Leo Sweet** beat **The Wolfman** in a cage match. (03-13-20)

—Kevin McElvaney

PHILADELPHIA—WWE Elimination Chamber at the Wells Fargo Center: **Erik & Ivar** beat **Zack Ryder & Curt Hawkins** ... **Daniel Bryan** defeated **Drew Gulak** ... Smackdown tag team champions **The Miz & John Morrison** beat **Tucker & Otis**, **Big E & Kofi Kingston**, **Lince Dorado & Gran Metalik**, and **Jimmy & Jey Uso** in a five-way ... **Aleister Black** defeated **AJ Styles** ... **Montez Ford & Angelo Dawkins** defeated **Seth Rollins & Buddy Murphy** ... **Sami Zayn**, **Shinsuke Nakamura**, & **Cesaro** beat Intercontinental champion **Braun Strowman** for Zayn to win the title ... **Shayna Baszler** defeated **Asuka**, **Liv Morgan**, **Natalya**, **Ruby Riott**, & **Sarah Logan**. (03-08-20)

—Kevin McElvaney

SELLERSVILLE—Star Pro Wrestling at the Forrest Lodge VFW: **Icarus** beat **Fenix Fury** ... **Jimmy Conway & Luca Brazzi** defeated **Eli Isom & Ryan Nova** ... **Frightmare** beat **Dan Champion** ... **Veda Scott** defeated **Logan Easton LaRoux** ... **Markus Skyler** beat **Jixx**, **Billy Avery**, and **Joe Clyde** to win the junior heavyweight title ... **Ellis Taylor**, **Griffin McCoy**, & **Jordan Oliver** beat **Green Ant**, **Razerhawk**, & **Wheeler YUTA** ... **Danny Duggan** defeated **Ophidian**. (03-07-20)

—David Valentin

ALLENTOWN—WWE at the PPL Center: **Kevin Owens**, **Montez Ford**, & **Angelo Dawkins** defeated **Seth Rollins**, **Akam**, & **Rezar** ... **Ricochet** pinned **Bobby Lashley** ... Smackdown tag team champions **The Miz & John Morrison** defeated **Kofi Kingston & Big E** ... **Shayna Baszler** defeated **Liv Morgan** ... Raw Women's champion **Becky Lynch** beat **Charlotte Flair** and **Asuka** in a triple-threat ... **Aleister Black** defeated **AJ Styles** by DQ ... **Aleister Black**, **Erik**, & **Ivar** beat **AJ Styles**, **Luke Gallows**, & **Karl Anderson** ... **Bray Wyatt** pinned **Daniel Bryan** ... **Drew McIntyre** pinned **Randy Orton**. (03-07-20)

—Leonard Brand

PLAINS—Grand Slam Wrestling at the True Mill Arena: **Adena Steele** beat **Kit Raff** ... **Trajan Horn** defeated **AJ Evers** ... **Adam Cain** beat **Chris Banks** ... **Team Blue & Gold** beat **Diamond City War Machines** and **The Cash Masters** in a three-team match ... **Eric Pinhat** won the 2020 Blackjack Brawl Rumble to become the King of the Valley. (02-29-20)

—David Valentin

READING—Atomic Championship Wrestling & Rogue Women Warriors at Reverb Night Club: **Johnny Moran** beat **John Wes** ... **Christina Marie** beat **Megan**

Chris Jericho did everything in his power to ensure he'd remain "Le Champion," though **Jon Moxley** had other ideas. As **Revolution** went off the air, it was **Moxley** standing tall as **AEW World** champ.



Mason ... **Wisly Jaccionor** beat cruiserweight champion **Jack Hershey** for the title ... **Dani Mo** defeated **Avista Varlowe** ... **Tim Donst** beat **Breaux Keller** ... Tri-State champion **Bones** won a 15-man battle royal ... **Andy Header** beat **Jason Gory** ... **Riley Shepard** defeated Rogue Women's champion **Layna Lennox** for the title ... **Crazy Steve** beat **Façade** ... Heavyweight champion **Dame** beat **Stockade** in a no-DQ match. (02-28-20)

—David Valentin

TENNESSEE

NASHVILLE—Southern Underground Pro at Exit/In: **AC Mack**, **Alan Angels**, & **Shawn Dean** defeated **Silas Mason**, **Devan Dixon**, & **Mr. Brickster** ... **Nolan Edward** defeated **Big Beef** ... **Kung Fu Janela** beat **Cabana Man Dan** ... **Kevin Ku & Dominic Garrini** defeated **Boomer Hatfield & Molly McCoy** ... **Brett Ison** beat **Benjamin Carter** ... **1 Called Manders** defeated **Jaden Newman** in a Bunkhouse Brawl. (03-15-20)

—Sean Monaghan

CROSSVILLE—Resolute Wrestling in Crossville: **Draven Lee** defeated **Hunter Irons** ... **Brian Valor** defeated **Tyler Foshie** ... **Dallas Troy** beat **Mehgen Moxlie** ... P4P champion **Dustin Johns** beat **Cole the Conspiracist** ... **Caleb Courageous** defeated P4P champion **Dustin Johns** for the title ... **Jebadiah Carlton & Uncle Byff** beat **Gunner Daniels & Thomas Cage** in a tornado tag team match ... **Brett Ison** defeated **Dallas Troy** ... Undisputed champion **Wayne Moxxi** defeated **James Anthony**. (03-13-20)

—Sean Monaghan

TEXAS

AMARILLO—NWA Top of Texas at the WrestlePlex: Tag team champions **Handgun**

Dan & Jordan Calubs beat **Blade & Kuda** ... **Brad Sanders** defeated **Nolen Phillips** ... **Cesar Torres** beat **Cade Hoss** and **Jayzon Zane** in a triple-threat ... **Greg Waller** defeated junior heavyweight champion **Ken Carter** for the title ... **Rex Lorgan & Shane Garrett** beat **Jake Logan & Jay Hazard**. (03-11-20)

—Tim Lynn

CARROLLTON—World Class Revolution at Plaza Arts Center: **Gino Medina** defeated **Mysterious Q** ... **Fuego del Sol** beat **Carlton Easley** ... **Evelyn Carter** defeated **Skylar Slice** ... **Ray the Bae** defeated **Rodney Mack** ... **Damon Windsor** vs. **Moonshine Mantell** ended in a double-countout. (03-05-20)

—Tim Lynn

CYPRESS—Texas All-Star Wrestling at the Cypress VFW Arena: **El Silencio** defeated **Jay Davis** ... **Nate Slater** defeated **Parviz** by DQ ... **Stevie Hendrix** beat cruiserweight champion **Nate Andrews** for the title ... **Azteca Dorado & Estrella Galactica** defeated **Warren J & Zackzilla** and tag team champions **Gordon & Gregory Great** for the title ... Women's champion **Killa Kate** beat **Madi Wrenkowski** ... **Nate Slater** defeated **WarMonger** in a no-holds-barred match ... Heavyweight champion **Steve De Marco** beat **Edgrin Stone** in a lumberjack match. (02-29-20)

—Bradley Bennett

WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE—Insane Championship Wrestling at La Pica Lounge: **Kaz Karter** defeated **Tim Hall** ... **Just Jake & Oso Turco** beat **Blazing Benjamin & Corporal Robinson** ... **Gunner Wixx** defeated **Tyler Baggins** ... **Jarrodd Jaxx** defeated **Jay Manny** ... **Dysfunction** beat **Simon Sez** ... **Scott Marciano**



defeated **Drake Daniels** ... Tag team champions **Ethen Matthews & Maverick Boone** beat **Doc Simmons & Zach Hendrix** ... **Juan Hernandez** defeated Midwest champion **Zac McGuire** for the title.
(03-15-20)

—Daniel Sorenson

INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

MONTREAL, QC—La Descente Du Coude at Bar 99: **Sonic Seb** defeated **Crasher Kid** and **Frank Evans** in a triple-threat ... **Lil Blay** beat **Alex Cooper** ... **Keven Gray, Jake Taylor, Jason Gray, & Nore** defeated **Angie Skye, Cecil Nyx, & Mary Lee Rose** in a handicap match ... **Sally** defeated **Karl Jepson** ... **Huith Rogen** beat **Fernando de la Cruz** and **The Hotstepper** in a triple-threat ... **Bear Boulder & Bear Bronson** defeated **Nick Stapp & TJ Crawford**.
(03-13-20)

—Timmy Chandler

SAINT-APOLLINAIRE, QC—North Shore Pro Wrestling at Centre Multifonctionnel St-Apollinaire: **Marko Estrada** defeated **Travis Toxic** ... **Wonderpyke** defeated **Tom LeBlond** ... **Matt Falco** beat **Giovanni** ... **Dave La Justice** defeated **Kamarade Gregory Belinsky** ... **Joe Kovick** beat **Hank Chabot** ... **Dylan Donovan** defeated **Radikal Rage** ... Generation NeXt champion **Stephen Sullivan** defeated **Jeff Saunders** in a streetfight.
(03-13-20)

—Pat Laprade

CHILE

QUILPUE—Fenix Lucha Libre at Gimnasio Club Mena: FNX champion **Stone Dragon** beat **Bastian Jerek** ... **Bastian Jerek** defeated **AK Remo, Di-Max, El Alacran, & Gladius** in a five-man ladder match to

become the top contender to the FNX title ... *Rebellion Title #1 Contendership Tournament, Semifinals*: **Frank Nova** defeated **Dai Do** ... **Revolver Rossi** defeated **Leon** ... *Final*: **Revolver Rossi** beat **Frank Nova**.
(03-14-20)

—Guillermo Vasquez

ENGLAND

LONDON—WrestleTalk Showcase at 229 The Venue: **Paul Robinson** defeated **The OJMO** ... **Chuck Cyrus** beat **Adam Maxted, Carlos Romo, Malik, and Paul Sayers** in a five-man Scramble of Doom match ... **Gisele Shaw** defeated **Mercedes Blaze** ... **Nathan Cruz & Lucas Steel** beat **Robbie X & Scotty Davis** ... **Kyle Fletcher** defeated **Connor Mills** ... **Will Ospreay** defeated **Bea Priestley**.
(03-16-20)

—Kevin McElvaney

LONDON—Pro Wrestling: EVE at Resistance Gallery: **Laura Di Matteo** defeated **Kira Chimera** ... **Kasey** beat **Maddison Miles** ... **Jetta** defeated **Clementine** ... International champion **Sammii Jayne** defeated **Holidead** ... **Zoe Lucas** beat **Rebel Kinney** ... **Skye Smitson** defeated **Session Moth Martina** ... EVE champion **Rhia O'Reilly** defeated **Alpha Female** ... **Kasey** defeated International champion **Sammii Jayne** for the title.
(03-07-20)

—Leah Kowalski

GERMANY

OBERHAUSEN—Westside Xtreme Wrestling at Turbinenhalle: Women's champion **Amale** beat **Stephanie Maze** ... **Timothy Thatcher & Yuki Ishikawa** beat **WALTER & Daisuke Ikeda** ... **Alexander Wolfe** defeated **Ilja Dragunov** and Shotgun champion **Avalanche** in a triple-threat for the title ... **Bandido, Jeff**

Cobb, & Julian Pace beat **Black Taurus, Hektor, & Puma King** ... *16 Carat Gold Tournament, Semifinals*: **Mike Bailey** defeated **Jurn Simmons** ... **Cara Noir** defeated **Eddie Kingston** ... *Final*: **Cara Noir** defeated **Mike Bailey**.
(03-08-20)

—STRIGGA

JAPAN

TOKYO—Dramatic Dream Team at DDT Ochanomizu Dojo: **Naomi Yoshimura** defeated **Jordan Heatley** ... **Masahiro Takanashi** beat **Keigo Nakamura** ... **Akito & Yuki Ino** vs. **Danshoku Dino & Yukio Naya** ended in a no-contest ... **Soma Takao & Tetsuya Endo** beat **Kazusada Higuchi & Mizuki Watase** ... **Konosuke Takeshita, Shunma Katsumata, & Royce Chambers** defeated **HARASHIMA, Naomi Yoshimura, & Makoto Oishi** ... **Daisuke Sasaki & Mad Paulie** beat **Chris Brookes & MAO** ... **Royce Chambers** won a 14-person battle royal, last eliminating **Danshoku Dino**.
(03-11-20)

—Nicole Carter

YOKAHAMA—Big Japan Pro Wrestling at Yokohama Bunka Gymnasium: **Akira Hyodo, Orca Uto & Takuho Kato** defeated **Hideyoshi Kamitani, Kosuke Sato, & Takuya Nomura** ... **Kishin Kawabata** beat **Yuichi Taniguchi** ... **Hiroyuki Kondo, Kazuhiko Matsuzaki, & Tajiri** defeated **Brahman Kei, Brahman Shu, & Great Kojika** ... **Banana Senga, Tsutomu Oosugi, Onryo, & Shinobu** beat **Kazuki Hashimoto, Kota Sekifuda, Tatsuhiko Yoshino, & Yuya Aoki** ... **KAMIKAZE, Ryota Hama, & Yasufumi Nakanoue** beat **Kazumi Kikuta, Ryuichi Kawakami, & Yuji Okabayashi** ... **Isami Kodaka & Yuko Miyamoto** defeated **Kankuro Hoshino & Masato Inaba, Drew Parker & Masaya Takahashi, and Takashi Sasaki & Yuki Ishikawa** in a four-team scramble death match ... **Josh Crane & Minoru Fujita** beat **Takumi Tsukamoto & Toshiyuki Sakuda** in a Scorpion and Cactus death match ... BJJ Strong heavyweight champion **Daichi Hashimoto** beat **Daisuke Sekimoto** ... **Ryuji Ito** defeated Death Match champion **Abdullah Kobayashi** for the title.
(03-11-20)

—STRIGGA

TOKYO—World Wonder Ring Stardom at Korakuen Hall: **Super Strong Starlight Machine** won a 16-woman battle royal, last eliminating **AZM** and **Momoe Nakanishi** ... **Natsuko Tora** defeated **Super Strong Starlight Machine** ... **Hana Kimura & Jungle Kyona** beat **Giulia & Maika** ... Goddesses of Stardom champions **Bea Priestley & Jamie Hayter** defeated **Momo Watanabe & Utami Hayashishita** ... **Mayu Iwatani** beat **Saki Kashima** in a lumberjack match.
(03-07-20)

—Nicole Carter

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

BACK ISSUES

Sum. 2003 (Special Edition): WWE at 40! (Digital only; visit pwi-online.com—Cover History)

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Jan. 2004: All Fired Up! Can Kane Blaze A Trail To The Raw Title? Plus: John Cena, Samoa Joe, Flair-Goldberg, Christian, ugliest wrestlers.

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Aug. 2006: Exclusive! Edge Comes Out Swinging! Plus: Brother Runt, Benoit & Lashley, Milano Collection AT.

Sept. 2006: The Triple-H Paradox: What He Needs He Cannot Keep. Plus: Mid-year report, Shawn Michaels, Rob Van Dam, Chris Daniels, SummerSlam's top 25 matches, ECW years—1992-2001.

Oct. 2006 (164-Page Special): Report Cards Of The Stars. *PWI* grades the sport's top 50 stars.

Jan. 2007: Sudden Impact! Can Kurt Angle Do For TNA What Hulk Hogan Did For WCW? Plus: Raw vs. Smackdown vs. TNA vs. ECW, Big Show, Orton-Masters-Carlito-Nitro, Matches of the Year.

Feb. 2007: Hollywood Ending: Cena's

Pumped For A Year Of Wrestling Only! Also: Randy Orton, Hardcore Holly, Booker-Batista, Kurt Angle.

April 2007 (164-Page Special): Wrestling Annual. A month-by-month recap of 2006.

May 2007: The 2007 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Batista, AMW, CM Punk, Bam Bam Bigelow, Flair-Dykstra, Chris Sabin.

July 2007: 'Mania Madness: Exclusive WM 23 Coverage. Plus: The State of the Game, Samoa Joe, wrestling deaths, global wrestling.

Sum. 2007: The Match Vince Let Get Away ... And The Title He Wouldn't! Also: Hogan-Big Show, Team 3-D, WrestleMania 23 weekend, ECW.

Sept. 2007: Orton Pays The Price In The Ring ... And Earns The Fans' Respect. Plus: Mid-year report, Edge, MVP, Jay Lethal, Great Khali.

Oct. 2007 (164-Page Special): Report Cards Of The Stars. *PWI* grades the sport's top 50 stars.

Nov. 2007: The *PWI* 500. Plus: John Cena, TNA, WWE draft, TNA analysis.

Dec. 2007: Triple-H Disses The Champ: "Cena's Disrespect Is A Sign Of Fear." Plus: Kurt & Karen Angle, McMahons-Hornswoggle, Batista-Khali, Raw vs. Smackdown vs. TNA vs. ECW, 90 minutes with Chris Jericho.

Jan. 2008 (164-Page Special): The Greats Of The Game. Relive the careers of: Triple-H, Kurt Angle, John Cena, Batista, Sting, Edge.

Feb. 2008: HBK: "If You Ask Me, I'm Younger Than Randy Orton." Plus: Kurt Angle, Nigel McGuinness, Gail Kim, Royal Rumble at 20, sleaziest sluts & slimeballs.

March 2008: 2007—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2007 In Review, Achievement 2007 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, phantastic photos of 2007, predictions for 2008.

June 2008: Special Tribute To Ric Flair: His 25 Greatest Covers Of All-Time. Plus: Y2J-JBL, Christian Cage, NWA, Brock Lesnar, Vickie Guerrero, John Morrison.

July 2008 (164-Page Special): Report Cards Of The Stars. *PWI* grades the sport's top 50 stars.

Aug. 2008: Was Shawn Wrong? Former World Champions Speak Loudly ... And Unanimously! Plus: Angle-Joe, Undertaker, CM Punk, Austin Aries, State of the Game.

Sept. 2008: Take It Like A Man, Orton! A Real Champion Knows How To Lose. Plus: Lance Cade, McChif, general managers, guide to independents, Mid-Year Report.

Oct. 2008: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport.

Dec. 2008: Five-Way Faceoff: Raw vs. Smackdown vs. ECW vs. ROH. Plus: Michelle McCool, JBL, Shawn Michaels, Angle-Styles, Ric Flair.

Jan. 2009 (164-Page Special): The Greats Of The Game: Relive the careers of: The Un-

dertaker, Randy Orton, Booker T, Shawn Michaels, Samoa Joe, Rey Mysterio Jr.

Feb. 2009: Annoying? Si ... Successful? Si ... But Is Santino A Worthy Champ? Plus: Sheik Abdul Bashir, TNA Wars, Hardys, Super 8, Bryan Danielson, second-generations stars vs. dads, 20 matches that changed wrestling.

March 2009: 2008—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2008 In Review, Achievement 2008 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, phantastic photos of 2008, predictions for 2009.

June 2009: The *PWI* Poll. Plus: Hardy vs. Hardy, Christian, Team 3-D, Kelly Kelly, CZW, Shawn Michaels, greatest wrestlers never to win world title.

July 2009 (164-Page Special): Report Cards Of The Stars. *PWI* grades the sport's top 50 stars.

Aug. 2009: Jacked Up! Old Pro, New Era For TNA. Plus: Batista, FCW prospects, MVP, Homicide, State of the Game.

Sept. 2009: Mid-Year Report. Plus: Angelina Love, MVP, Evan Bourne, *PWI*'s 30th anniversary.

Oct. 2009: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport.

Dec. 2009: Five-Way Faceoff: Raw vs. Smackdown vs. ECW vs. ROH. Plus: ODB-Cody, Orton-Cena, American Wolves, Dolph Ziggler, anti-Americanism, Gabe Sapolsky.

Jan. 2010 (164-Page Special): The Greats Of The Game: Relive the careers of: Chris Jericho, AJ Styles, CM Punk, Team 3-D, Big Show, Kevin Nash.

Feb. 2010: Triple-H—Wrestler Of The Decade. Plus: The Decade In Review, Desmond Wolfe, Super 8, John Cena, Hulk Hogan, Capt. Lou by Paul Heyman.

March 2010: 2009—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2009 In Review, Achievement 2009 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, phantastic photos of 2009.

July 2010 (164-Page Special): Report Cards Of The Stars. *PWI* grades the sport's top 50 stars, plus Shawn Michaels' career grades.

Aug. 2010: The Bell Tolls For HBK: Team Coverage Of WrestleMania 26. Plus: Adam Pearce, Amazing Red, Briscoes, State of the Game.

Sept. 2010: Cena (2010), Kobashi (2010), Flair (1990), Race (1980)—Who Would Win The Battle Of The Decades? Plus: Vince McMahon, Jack Swagger, Abyss, Edge, collectibles, Mid-Year Report.

Oct. 2010: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport.

Dec. 2010: Cena's Suicide Mission: There's No Winning And There's No Way Out! Plus: Danielson-Shingo, Kane-Undertaker, Hardcore Justice, Motor City Machine Guns, secondary titles, four-way faceoff.

Jan. 2011 (164-Page Special): The Greats Of The Game. Relive the careers of: Chris Jericho, AJ Styles, CM Punk, Team 3-D, Big Show, Kevin Nash.

Feb. 2011: John Cena vs. Randy Orton: *PWI*'s Special 50-Category Analysis. Plus: Daniel Bryan, Jeff Hardy, Phill Shatter, Big Show, ROH, CM Punk, What's Ahead in 2011?

March 2011: 2010—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2010 In Review, Achievement 2010 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, phantastic photos of 2010.

June 2011: CM Punk: Is He Destined To Let History Destroy Him? Plus: The Hardys,

Edge, Sheamus-Morrison, Winter, all-time WrestleMania roster, *PWI* Poll.

July 2011 (164-Page Special): Report Cards Of The Stars. *PWI* grades the sport's top 50 stars, plus Undertaker's career grades.

Aug. 2011: Rock vs. Cena: Can't "Bring It" Soon Enough! Plus: Sin Cara, Matt Morgan, WrestleMania 27, pay-per-view piracy, State of the Game.

Sept. 2011: Can Cena Stay On Top With Rock In His Head? Plus: Randy Savage, RVD-Hulk, Christian, Brie Bella, Super 8, Mid-Year Report.

Oct. 2011: *PWI* 500. (Digital format only)

Nov. 2011: Memo To Triple-H: Don't Fire Vince ... Avenge Him! Plus: Ezekiel Jackson, Madison Eagles, Brian Kendrick, ROH-Sinclair, "*PWI* Female 50."

Jan. 2012: What The H Is He Doing? Five Directions Hunter Can Take WWE. Plus: Kelly Kelly, Beer Money Inc., Jay Lethal, Hulk Hogan, Raw vs. Smackdown vs. TNA vs. ROH

Feb. 2012: What's Ahead In 2012 For Wrestling's Top Stars? Plus: Sting-Dixie-Hulk, John Laurinaitis, future stars, Cena vs. all-time greats, Davey Richards.

May 2012: Rock vs. Cena: Our 11-Page Report On The Match Of The Century. Plus: Austin Aries, R-Truth, TNA-OVW, WWE injuries, Report Cards.

July 2012: The *PWI* Poll. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Hardy-Angle, Daniel Bryan, Raquel Diaz, Gunner, bounties.

Sept. 2012: What The Brock! How Lesnar Ruined His Own WWE Return. Plus: Kevin Steen, Beth Phoenix, Stanley Weston-WWE, streaks, Raw vs. Smackdown vs. TNA vs. ROH

Jan. 2013: The Anti-Punk: Why Sheamus Is So Comfortable In His Pale Skin: Plus: Antonio Cesaro, Miz, Magnus-Joe, the "*PWI* Female 50."

March 2013: 2012—The Year In Wrestling. (Digital format only)

May 2013: Finally! The WWE Title Has Come Back To The Rock: What To Expect From 'Mania And Beyond. Plus: All-Time WrestleMania show-stealers, Kevin Steen, Bully Ray, report cards.

July 2013: Redemption, Thy Name Is Cena. Plus: WrestleMania 29 Winners & Losers, WWE Hall of Fame, Jesse Sorensen, Matt Taven, Devon, *PWI* Poll.

Sept. 2013: Our Annual WWE vs. TNA vs. ROH Face-Offs. Plus: Ryback, Mark Henry, Curtis Axel, Chris Sabin, Briscoes, MITB.

Nov. 2013: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport.

Jan. 2014: Daniel Bryan: The Fans Say "Yes"! Why Do The McMahons Say "No"? Plus: Cheerleader Melissa, Adam Cole, Punk-Heyman, Magnus, AJ Styles, "*PWI* Female 50."

March 2014: 2013—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2013 In Review, Achievement 2013 awards, Unofficial/Official awards.

July 2014: WrestleMania 30: The Real Winners & Losers. Plus: Ultimate Warrior, Adam Cole, Carter Family, Super 8, brothers, WWE HOF, *PWI* Poll.

Sept. 2014: Celebrate With Us As *PW*/Turns 35. Plus: AJ Styles, NXT, Eric Young, WWE vs. TNA vs. ROH. (Digital only)

Dec. 2014: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport.

Feb. 2015: Unstoppable: Why Brock Lesnar Will Remain Champ For As Long As He Likes. Plus: Cesaro, Jay Briscoe, Bobby

Roode, Paige, the "*PWI* Female 50".

April 2015: 2014—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2014 In Review, Achievement 2014 awards, Unofficial/Official awards.

June 2015: Report Cards Of The Stars. Plus: Alberto el Patron, CM Punk, Bobby Lashley, Wrestle Kingdom 9, WrestleMania 1 vs. WrestleMania 31.

Aug. 2015: WrestleMania 31: The Real Winners & Losers. Plus: Johnny Mundo, Ethan Carter III, *PWI* Poll.

Oct. 2015: Exclusive Interview—Kevin Owens: "I'm Proud To Be Different." Plus: Dolph Ziggler, Drew Galloway, U.S. & I-C titles, ROH vs. New Japan, wrestling's rising stars.

Dec. 2015: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport.

Feb. 2016: Female 50. Plus: Nikki Bella, Jay Lethal, NXT, injustices.

April 2016: 2015—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2015 In Review, Achievement 2015 awards, Unofficial/Official awards.

June 2016: A(+J)! Our Report Cards For 100 Stars: Plus: New Japan, Roderick Strong, TNA, Rey Mysterio Jr., WresleMania memories.

Aug. 2016: WrestleMania 32: The Real Winners & Losers. Plus: Drew Galloway, WWE Hall of Fame, *PWI* Poll.

Oct. 2016: Seth Rollins' Exclusive "Hotseat" Interview. Plus: Young Bucks, Jax Dane, Jade, Napalm Bomb, WWE Hits & Misses.

Feb. 2017: A Bizarre New Universe: This Is Not Your Father-in-Law's WWE. Plus: Will Ospreay, Hotseat: Kenny Omega, Female 50.

Aug. 2017: WrestleMania 33: The Real Winners & Losers. Plus: 2017 *PWI* Poll, Hotseat: Christopher Daniels.

Oct. 2017: WWE's Six-Million Dollar Man: Brock Lesnar Is Worth Every Penny. Plus: NXT, Silas Young, Tim Storm, Super 8, Moose, Hotseat: Bobby Roode.

Dec. 2017: *PWI* 500. Ranking the top 500 stars in the sport (Digital only.)

Feb. 2018: The Brains Behind The Braun: Strowman—A Monster 60-Minute Interview. Plus: Neville, Jinder Mahal, Dalton Castle, Female 50 (Digital only.)

June 2018: 2017 Report Cards. Plus: Austin Aries, Curt Hawkins, Raw 25th/Royal Rumble, Who has/hasn't compete at WrestleMania, Hotseat: Alexa Bliss

Aug. 2018: Ronda Rousey Comes Up Big ... But Is She Really The Big Loser? Plus: WrestleMania 34 Real Winners & Losers, WWE Hall of Fame, *PWI* Poll, Hotseat: Scott D'Amore & Don Callis

Feb. 2019: Hotseat—Ronda Rousey: "I'm Living A Dream; I Would Do This For Free." Plus: Women's 100, Cody Rhodes, Roman Reigns.

June 2019: Eco-Friendly? Yes ... Fan-Friendly? No Way! Is Daniel Bryan Destroying His Legacy? Plus: Jeff Cobb, AEW, Report Cards. Hotseat: Becky Lynch.

Aug. 2019: Kofi-Mania! The Biggest Winner Is ... All Of Us! Plus: WrestleMania Winners & Losers, *PWI* Poll, Hotseat: PCO

Feb. 2020: Our Annual Women's 100: Becky Lynch Cleans Up The Division. Plus: WWE vs. AEW, Hotseat: Chris Jericho.

April 2020: 2019—The Year In Wrestling. Plus: 2019 In Review, Achievement 2019 awards, Unofficial/Official awards.

June 2020: Wrestler Of The Deade: AJ Styles. Plus: Tessa Blanchard, Dana Brooke, decade awards, 25 best wrestlers under 25, Hotseat: AJ Styles.

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DECADE AWARDS

A lot can happen in 10 years. While compiling reader votes for our Decade Awards (June 2020), we couldn't help but notice how much the wrestling landscape has changed since 2010. Our readers noticed, too—and they weren't shy about sharing their thoughts.

"If you'd have told me five years ago a feud from Japan would take top honors in this poll, I wouldn't have believed you," wrote Ted Atkins. "As a longtime New Japan fan, I'm thrilled to see them have so much success in the States."

"How the heck did John Cena get voted Most Popular Wrestler of the Decade?" asked Michael McCarey. "I realize he's got his fans. I just don't get how he could beat out Daniel Bryan or CM Punk."

"I'm not saying Charlotte Flair wasn't Woman of the Decade, but it was nice seeing some names from the past in the runners-up section," wrote Maura Peters. "Women like Gail Kim, Sara Amato, and AJ Lee really paved the way for the Charlottes of the world to do their thing."

A PHENOMENAL RETIREMENT

I really liked AJ Styles' "Hotseat" interview in the last issue (June 2020), and I think a lot of wrestlers could learn from him.

AJ doesn't want to be wrestling into his 50s. He says he wants to go out on top, and I think he's got the right idea there.

Sure, some older wrestlers might actually need the money, but there are plenty who just don't know when to quit. They keep on hogging the spotlight when they should be at home watching their grandkids. Frankly, it's a little bit sad.

Thanks for all the great matches, AJ. I hope you have an amazing retirement, when that day finally comes.

BILL PADRE
Ewing, NJ

ABSENTEE BEAST

I'm not surprised Brock Lesnar dominated the Most Hated Wrestler of the Decade category, but I'm starting to wonder whether that's a good thing. Even though he's great at earning the genuine hatred of fans, I sometimes think he's hurting more than he's helping.

On the one hand, he's a dominant monster, and beating him really does mean something. On the other, he's hardly ever around. Every week he doesn't bother showing up, title around his waist, I feel like that title starts to mean a little less. And based on conversations I've had with friends, I can't be the only one who feels this way.

I really want to like to hate Brock. Could he maybe show up to work a little more often?

MARTIN KOWALSKI
Catonsville, MD



Brock Lesnar taunts R-Truth, whom he'd just laid out with an F5. Lesnar's sporadic appearances on WWE television have earned him the ire of fans like Martin Kowalski.

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ANYTHING YOU CAN DO ...

Tessa Blanchard is far too kind to her critics. Last I checked, it was 2020, and women can do anything that men can do. That includes being the top champion of a major wrestling promotion.

I grew up watching wrestling with my grandmother, who idolized athletes like Mildred Burke and Johnnie Mae Young. Because of Meemaw, I knew there were tough women out there who could legitimately hold their own against most any man.

Tessa Blanchard calls intergender wrestling “empowering,” and I think she’s right. Today, as I raise my 10-year-old daughter, I’m proud that she can watch women like Tessa shatter the glass ceiling and beat their critics (in a very literal sense).

ROSE ANDERSON
St Louis, MO

WHAT ABOUT BOBBY?

Looking over the list of the decade’s top “*PWI* 500” finishers (June 2020), there was one name that really stuck out to me: Bobby Lashley at number 9. If you’ve only seen him on *Raw*, you might not know what a big deal he was only a few years back.

I have to admit, I wasn’t the biggest fan of Lashley during his first WWE run. He was big and strong, but his matches just didn’t do anything for me. Once he showed up on *Impact*, he was obviously a top guy. He had the look and the technical skill to step out there every single week and show he could hang with anybody.

WWE knows how awesome Lashley is. I feel like they’ve held him back by putting him in silly soap opera storylines. He’s easily a main-event wrestler, and I wish more people could see what he’s capable of.

JUSTIN THOMPSON
Cheektowaga, NY

REGENCY BIAS

I have no clue what some of the other *PWI* readers are thinking sometimes. Besides the Match of the Decade award, almost every winner was from the past few years.

Charlotte won Woman of the Decade. New Day won Tag Team of the Decade. Okada and Omega won best Feud. What gives? Does anyone have a memory that goes back farther than 2016?

When I think about the best wrestling of the 2010s, I think about people like Chris Jericho, tag teams like the Usos, and all the great matches from the TNA

Knockouts division. On top of all that, how do you not pick The Authority as Most Hated?

I’m not knocking any of the winners. I guess I’m just big on honoring the rules. If something is called a DECADE poll, I’m voting based on the WHOLE decade.

BRIAN SCOFIELD
Oakland, CA

INSPIRED BY DANA

Just when I thought I couldn’t be a bigger fan of Dana Brooke, Harry Burkett had to go and prove me wrong. (“Tomorrow Is Never Promised,” June 2020). Dana is clearly such a strong person in more ways than one.

I respect her so much for opening up about the loss of her boyfriend. I can only imagine how tough it must have been going back to wrestling right after Dallas passed. Dana is an inspiration for all the fans who have lost someone suddenly.

I would just like to say to anyone dealing with grief, remember that things will eventually get better. Remember the times you had with the person you lost. Cherish those moments with the people you still have. It might take time, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. I promise.

MARY BETH HOPPER
Waco, TX □

PWI OFFICIAL RATINGS

FOR PERIOD ENDED
APRIL 7, 2020

TOP 10

- 1 DREW McINTYRE**
265, Ayr, Scotland
(5) WWE heavyweight champion
- 2 TETSUYA NAITO**
225, Tokyo, Japan
(2) IWGP World/Intercontinental champion
- 3 JON MOXLEY**
224, Cincinnati, OH
(7) AEW World champion
- 4 BRAUN STROWMAN**
385, Sherrills Ford, NC
(8) WWE Universal champion
- 5 ADAM COLE**
210, Panama City, FL
(6) NXT heavyweight champion
- 6 RUSH**
225, Jalisco, Mexico
(-) ROH heavyweight champion
- 7 JAKE HAGER**
275, Perry, OK
(-) No. 1 contender AEW World title
- 8 TESSA BLANCHARD**
125, Charlotte, NC
(-) Impact heavyweight champion
- 9 JACOB FATU**
285, Sacramento, CA
(-) MLW heavyweight champion
- 10 NICK ALDIS**
242, King's Lynn, England
(9) NWA heavyweight champion



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DREW McINTYRE

TAG TEAMS

- 1 JOHN MORRISON & THE MIZ**
Combined weight: 435 pounds
(-) Smackdown tag team champions
- 2 KENNY OMEGA & ADAM PAGE**
Combined Weight: 442 pounds
(2) AEW World tag team champions
- 3 MONTEZ FORD & ANGELO DAWKINS**
Combined weight: 492 pounds
(-) Raw tag team champions
- 4 MATT RIDDLE & PETE DUNNE**
Combined weight: 421 pounds
(-) NXT World tag team champions
- 5 HIROSHI TANAHASHI & KOTA IBUSHI**
Combined weight: 428 pounds
(-) IWGP World tag team champions
- 6 JAY LETHAL & JONATHAN GRESHAM**
Combined weight: 400 pounds
(7) ROH tag team champions
- 7 EVIL UNO & STU GRAYSON**
Combined weight: 405 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders AEW tag team title
- 8 SUWAMA & SHUJI ISHIKAWA**
Combined weight: 552 pounds
(8) All Japan tag team champions
- 9 ELI DRAKE & JAMES STORM**
Combined weight: 464 pounds
(9) NWA tag team champions
- 10 ETHAN PAGE & JOSH ALEXANDER**
Combined weight: 480 pounds
(10) Impact Wrestling tag team champions

WWE RAW

WWE Champion:

DREW McINTYRE

(1) 265, Ayr, Scotland

- 1—BROCK LESNAR**
(C) 286, Minneapolis, MN
- 2—ANDRADE**
(2) 210, Gomez Palacio, Mex.
- 3—KEVIN OWENS**
(5) 266, Marietta, GA
- 4—REY MYSTERIO JR.**
(8) 175, San Diego, CA
- 5—ALEISTER BLACK**
(6) 215, Amsterdam, Holland
- 6—RICOCHET**
(3) 188, Paducah, KY
- 7—SETH ROLLINS**
(7) 227, Davenport, IA
- 8—RIDDICK MOSS**
(-) 245, Edina, MN
- 9—BOBBY LASHLEY**
(9) 273, Colorado Springs, CO
- 10—HUMBERTO CARRILLO**
(-) 198, Monterrey, Mexico

SMACKDOWN

Universal Champion:

BRAUN STROWMAN

(1) 385, Sherrills Ford, NC

- 1—GOLDBERG**
(-) 285, Tulsa, OK
- 2—ROMAN REIGNS**
(2) 265, Pensacola, FL
- 3—SAMI ZAYN**
(-) 212, Laval, QC
- 4—BRAY WYATT**
(C) 286, Brooksville, FL
- 5—DANIEL BRYAN**
(3) 210, Aberdeen, WA
- 6—SHINSUKE NAKAMURA**
(4) 229, Kyoto, Japan
- 7—CESARO**
(-) 232, Lucerne, Switzerland
- 8—DREW GULAK**
(-) 193, Philadelphia, PA
- 9—JEFF HARDY**
(-) 225, Cameron, NC
- 10—DOLPH ZIGGLER**
(10) 218, Hollywood, FL

AEW

World Heavyweight Champion:

JON MOXLEY

(1) 224, Cincinnati, OH

- 1—JAKE HAGER**
(-) 275, Perry, OK
- 2—CHRIS JERICHO**
(C) 227, Winnipeg, MB
- 3—CODY RHODES**
(2) 220, Atlanta, GA
- 4—PAC**
(3) 206, Newcastle, England
- 5—MJF**
(4) 216, Plainville, NY
- 6—KENNY OMEGA**
(5) 229, Winnipeg, MB
- 7—DARBY ALLIN**
(6) 180, Seattle, WA
- 8—ADAM PAGE**
(7) 214, Aaron's Creek, VA
- 9—SHAWN SPEARS**
(-) 223, Niagara Falls, ON
- 10—BRODIE LEE**
(-) 275, Rochester, NY

IMPACT

Heavyweight Champion:

TESSA BLANCHARD

(C) 125, Charlotte, NC

- 1—SAMI CALLIHAN**
(1) 207, Bellefontaine, OH
- 2—WILLIE MACK**
(9) 280, Los Angeles, CA
- 3—ACE AUSTIN**
(4) 190, Atlantic City, NJ
- 4—JOSH ALEXANDER**
(-) 240, Toronto, ON
- 5—MOOSE**
(7) 295, Atlanta, GA
- 6—TREY MIGUEL**
(-) 172, Toledo, OH
- 7—HERNANDEZ**
(-) 285, Houston, TX
- 8—MADMAN FULTON**
(-) 315, Toledo, OH
- 9—CHRIS BEY**
(-) 180, Alexandria, VA
- 10—JOHNNY SWINGER**
(-) 215, Niagara Falls, NY

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or tag team. These ratings are compiled by a committee consisting of Kevin McElvaney, Pat Laprade, Kris Zellner, Louie Dee, and STRIGGA (cagematch.net, purolove.com). The numbers in parentheses indicate a wrestler's position in that category last issue. Agate-sized ratings are supplied to *PWI* by promoters and can be e-mailed to us at pwireresults@yahoo.com (please put the word "ratings" in the subject line).

BIG JAPAN WRESTLING: CHAMPION—Daichi Hashimoto; **1**—Ryuji Ito; **2**—Daisuke Sekimoto; **3**—Abdulla Kobayashi; **4**—Minoru Fujita; **5**—Yuya Aoki; **6**—Ryota Hama; **7**—Yuji Okabayashi; **8**—Kazumi Kikuta; **9**—Yasufumi Nakanoue; **10**—Akira Hyodo

CONSEJO MUNDIAL DE LUCHA LIBRE: CHAMPION—Ultimo Guerrero; **1**—Caristico; **2**—Volador Jr.; **3**—El Terrible; **4**—Niebla Roja; **5**—El Cavernario; **6**—Stuka Jr.; **7**—El Cuatrero; **8**—Titan; **9**—Soberano Jr.; **10**—Mistico

DRAMATIC DREAM TEAM: CHAMPION—Masato Tanaka; **1**—Konosuke Takeshita; **2**—Daisuke Sasaki; **3**—Tetsuya Endo; **4**—Yukio Sakaguchi; **5**—Shinya Aoki; **6**—Harashima; **7**—Soma Takao; **8**—Kazusada Higuchi; **9**—Chris Brookes; **10**—MAO

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: CHAMPION—Sam Shields; **1**—Eric Martin; **2**—Joey Ace; **3**—Rey Calitri; **4**—Chris Wylde; **5**—Chris Rockwell; **6**—Jay D Luscious; **7**—Mr. Ooh La La; **8**—Kyle Christopher; **9**—Travis Lee; **10**—Napalm Bomb

EVOLVE: CHAMPION—Josh Briggs; **1**—AR Fox; **2**—Brendan Vink; **3**—Anthony Greene; **4**—JD Drake; **5**—Curt Stallion; **6**—Jake Atlas; **7**—Joe Gacy; **8**—Colby Corino; **9**—Eddie Kingston; **10**—Leon Ruff

MAJOR LEAGUE WRESTLING: CHAMPION—Jacob Fatu; **1**—Alexander Hammerstone; **2**—Davey Boy Smith Jr.; **3**—Myron Reed; **4**—Brian Pillman Jr.; **5**—Tom Lawlor; **6**—MJF; **7**—Mance Warner; **8**—Richard Holliday; **9**—Low Ki; **10**—King Mo

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE: CHAMPION—Nick Aldis; **1**—Zicky Dice; **2**—Ricky Starks; **3**—Thom Latimer; **4**—Tim Storm; **5**—Mr. Anderson; **6**—James Storm; **7**—Trevor Murdoch; **8**—Aron Stevens; **9**—Scott Steiner; **10**—Flip Gordon

NEW FOCUS WRESTLING: CHAMPION—Josh Lewis; **1**—Scotty Wolf; **2**—Flash Flanagan; **3**—Rob Conway; **4**—Vic the Bruiser; **5**—Chase Stevens; **6**—Mitch Blake; **7**—Johnny Richards; **8**—Benny Bray; **9**—J-Rocc Daddy; **10**—Robert Black

NXT U.K.: CHAMPION—WALTER; **1**—Ilja Dragunov; **2**—Finn Balor; **3**—Jordan Devlin; **4**—Noam Dar; **5**—Wolfgang; **6**—Trent Seven; **7**—Joe Coffey; **8**—Ridge Holland; **9**—Kassius Ohno; **10**—Amir Jordan

PRIME TIME PRO WRESTLING: CHAMPION—O'Shay Edwards; **1**—Effy; **2**—Trish Adora; **3**—Isaiah Frazier; **4**—Breaux Keller; **5**—Mack Buckler; **6**—AC Mack; **7**—Faye Jackson; **8**—Still Life with Apricots and Pears; **9**—Tasha Steelz; **10**—Logan Laroux

SUPREME WRESTLING: CHAMPION—Eric Draven; **1**—Angus Barnett; **2**—The Crusader; **3**—Aaron Abbott; **4**—Gaston LaRue; **5**—Chuck McRoberts; **6**—SETH; **7**—Cameron Saturn; **8**—Josh Lewis; **9**—Leon Elliot; **10**—Nic Noble

WESTSIDE XTREME WRESTLING: CHAMPION—Bobby Gunns; **1**—Cara Noir; **2**—Mike Bailey; **3**—David Starr; **4**—Amale; **5**—Daniel Makabe; **6**—Alexander Wolfe; **7**—Jurn Simmons; **8**—Eddie Kingston; **9**—Rotation; **10**—Julian Pace

ROH

Heavyweight Champion:
RUSH
(3) 225, Jalisco, Mexico
1—PCO
(C) 300, Montreal, QC
2—DRAGON LEE
(1) 165, Jalisco, Mexico
3—MARTY SCURLL
(4) 185, Cambridge, England
4—FLIP GORDON
(9) 187, Kalispell, MT
5—BRODY KING
(-) 285, Van Nuys, CA
6—VINCENT
(5) 189, Warwick, RI
7—KENNY KING
(8) 230, Orlando, FL
8—MARK HASKINS
(10) 209, Faringdon, England
9—ALEX SHELLEY
(-) 215, Detroit, MI
10—DAN MAFF
(-) 280, Newark, NJ

NXT

Champion:
ADAM COLE
(C) 210, Panama City, FL
1—KEITH LEE
(1) 320, Wichita Falls, TX
2—FINN BALOR
(4) 190, Bray, Ireland
3—TOMMASO CIAMPA
(2) 201, Milwaukee, WI
4—MATT RIDDLE
(5) 216, Las Vegas, NV
5—PETE DUNNE
(7) 205, Birmingham, England
6—JORDAN DEVLIN
(6) 180, Bray, Ireland
7—VELVETEEN DREAM
(-) 227, Washington, DC
8—DAMIAN PRIEST
(10) 251, New York, NY
9—DOMINIK DIJAKOVIC
(9) 270, Worcester, MA
10—CAMERON GRIMES
(-) 220, Cameron, NC

NEW JAPAN

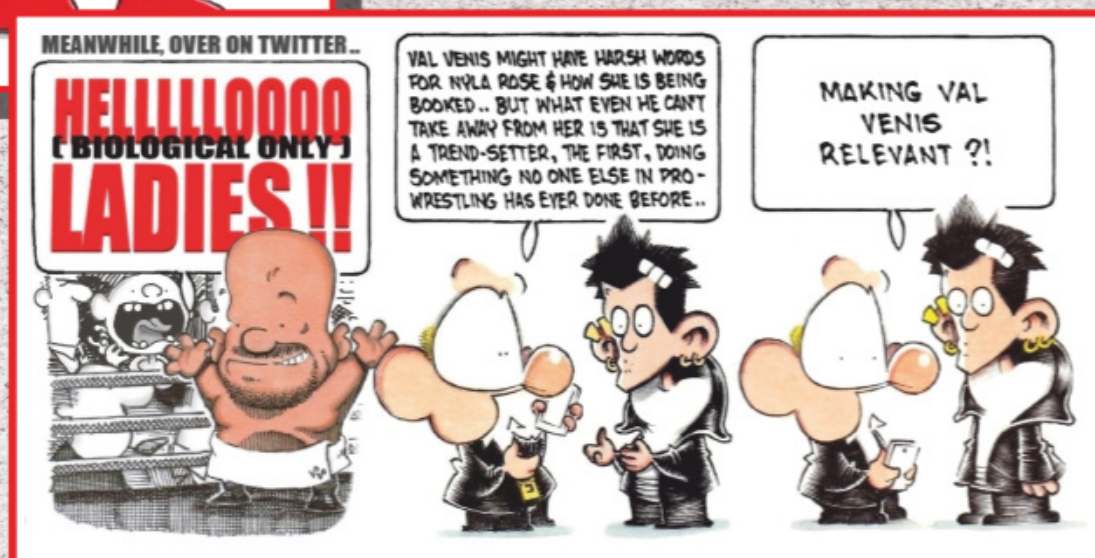
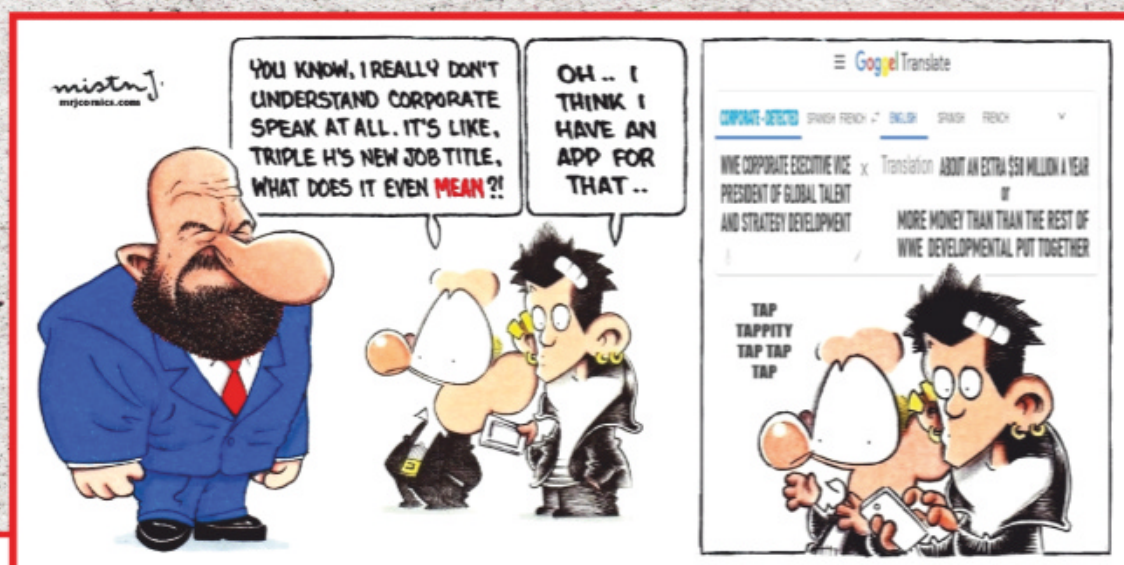
IWGP World Champion:
TETSUYA NAITO
(C) 225, Tokyo, Japan
1—SHINGO TAKAGI
(2) 212, Yamanashi, Japan
2—KAZUCHIKA OKADA
(3) 236, Tokyo, Japan
3—SANADA
(-) 220, Niigata, Japan
4—HIROMU TAKAHASHI
(5) 194, Tokyo, Japan
5—JON MOXLEY
(6) 224, Cincinnati, OH
6—JAY WHITE
(4) 198, Auckland, New Zealand
7—ZACK SABRE JR.
(8) 187, London, England
8—KENTA
(1) 287, Soka, Japan
9—WILL OSPREAY
(9) 190, Essex, England
10—MINORU SUZUKI
(10) 225, Yokohama, Japan

WOMEN

1—BECKY LYNCH
(2) 135, Dublin, Ireland
Raw Women's champion
2—CHARLOTTE FLAIR
(3) 141, Charlotte, NC
NXT Women's champion
3—TESSA BLANCHARD
(1) 125, Charlotte, NC
4—NYLA ROSE
(-) 185, Washington, DC
AEW Women's champion
5—BAYLEY
(6) 119, San Jose, CA
Smackdown Women's champion
6—SHAYNA BASZLER
(5) 136, Sioux Falls, SD
7—RHEA RIPLEY
(4) 137, Adelaide, Australia
8—JORDYNNE GRACE
(-) 155, Austin, TX
9—SASHA BANKS
(-) 115, Fairfield, CA
10—KAY LEE RAY
(9) 112, Johnstone, Scotland

DRAWING BLOOD

BY JASON CONLAN





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